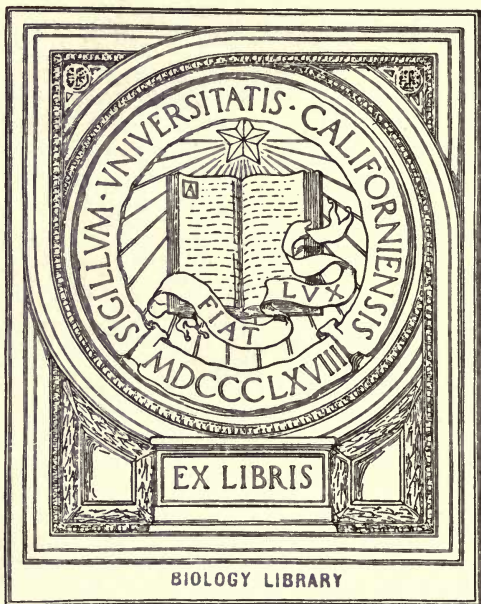


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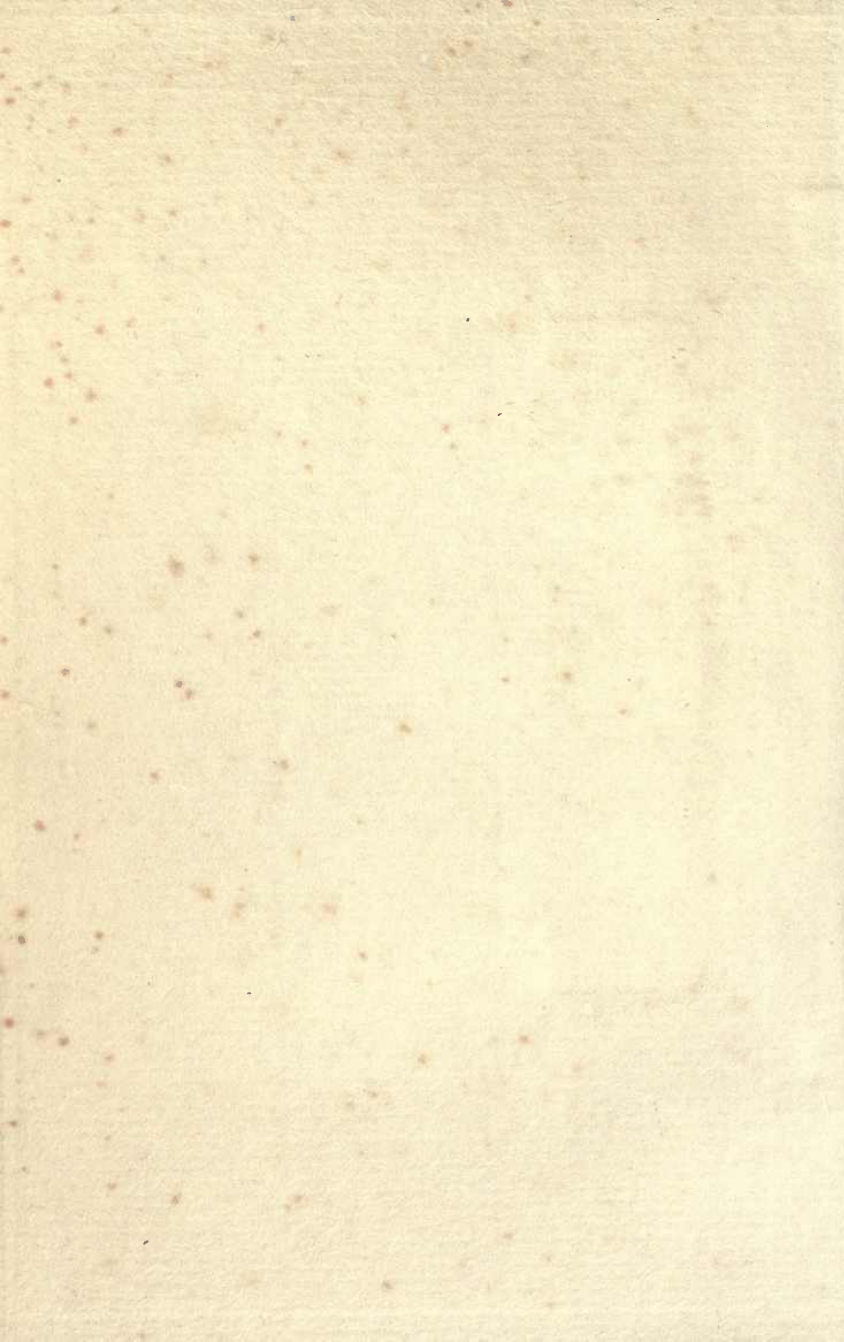
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ARTHUR-H-PATTERSON

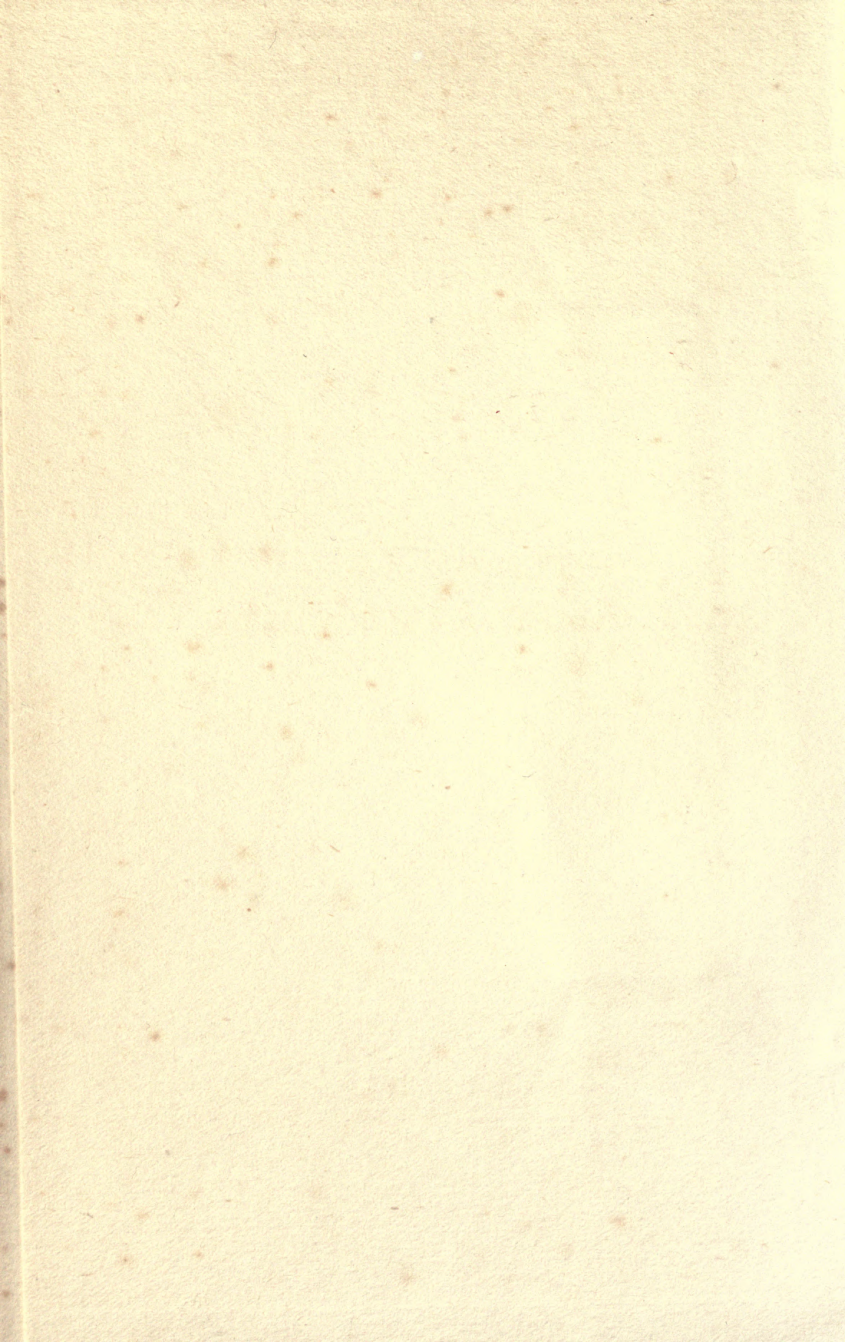


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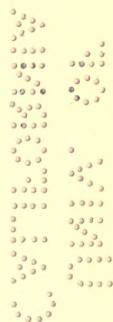
to Mac Griffin

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NOTES OF AN
EAST COAST NATURALIST





SPRING

SHOVELLERS AND BEARDED TIT

NOTES OF AN EAST COAST NATURALIST

A SERIES OF OBSERVATIONS MADE AT ODD
TIMES DURING A PERIOD OF TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF GREAT YARMOUTH

BY

ARTHUR H. PATTERSON

ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE MARINE BIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



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JOHN A. HENDERSON
BY THE AUTHOR
LONDON

PREFATORY NOTE

SO many books dealing with Natural History subjects have of late years been written, that a preface has become as necessary as an apology for adding to the number as for briefly setting forth the subject-matter of a book.

While claiming the forbearance of the Reader, I would like to state that the following Notes and Observations are taken from the many entries made in my Notebooks during a period of a quarter of a century, and relate to the Fauna of the neighbourhood of Great Yarmouth.

It is possible that some of the entries may prove interesting as recording certain traits and habits of the Birds and Animals of that locality previously unnoticed by Naturalists; there may be some originality worthy of notice; and some value may

attach to these Notes and Observations owing to their dealing with a period during which great changes have taken place in the habitat of the Local Fauna. They photograph and preserve, as it were, much that future Naturalists may not even hope to meet with.

The Notes are arranged not so much systematically as chronologically. I have begun with almost my first "Entry" in 1878, since which time I have made it the concluding task of each day to jot down anything worth noting that has occurred. It may not be superfluous to add that so far as love of the observation of Natural Phenomena is concerned, it must have been born with me. My earliest remembered toddles were in pursuit of the crawling, fluttering, flying things around me. Somewhat unfortunately, my hours of leisure and recreation were, until very recently, exceedingly scanty, and my rambles had perforce to be taken either before seven in the morning or after that hour in the evening.

It will be noticed that in the Notes dates have been freely given; this will be useful, perhaps, to

other Naturalists, besides adding value to the separate records.

It may not be out of place to add that, since 1891, I have entirely discarded the gun as a "help" to observation, and have derived comparably more real pleasure and interest in the pursuit of wild life with a field-glass than I ever did with a fowling-piece. I only regret that so many incidents mentioned herein should relate to slaughter and sport.

A. H. P.

July 1904.

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Yours truly,

A. H. P.

London

1881

1882

1883

1884

1885

1886

1887

1888

1889

1890

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NOTES OF AN EAST COAST NATURALIST

BIRD NOTES

SWALLOWS' NESTING-SITES

THE Swallow is extremely capricious in its choice of locations for the building of its nest, the chief object of its solicitude apparently being immunity from the inclemency of the weather rather than suitability or comfort of the situation. In the summer of 1878 a pair built their nest in the hold of the old ship *Agnes*, a brigantine of the days of Nelson, that had been scuttled and sunk at the entrance of a creek or "drain" on Breydon in order to divert the current. Several feet of water were in the hold of the vessel, no great space intervening between the surface of the water and the deck. The little mud cradle, suspended on a beam, was

half-circular in shape. The parent birds had access through the open hatchway; and were delighted eventually to see their progeny all safely started in life, notwithstanding the fact that at high water their tiny domicile was suspended in the centre of two thousand acres of not always placid salt water.

For some years there has been noticed here, as in many other localities, a steady falling-off in the numbers of Swallows frequenting the town; certain old chimneys, peopled by successive generations, even having been deserted. A pair built in a shaft erected immediately over a main sewer for the purposes of ventilation—probably the most offensive spot on earth they could have discovered. They frequented it for some years.

Those quaint old windmills, which effect so much of the drainage of the marshes and adjacent lowlands, and which give such a picturesque appearance to the flat landscape, are favourite quarters of this species, whose nests are found inside them, in the most curious of situations. The birds in most cases enter and leave the mill through broken window-panes, or a decayed and crumbled corner of a door or shutter; sometimes through some niche above a misfitting door or shutter. I have overhauled several mills,

and been astonished at the spots chosen by the erratic birds.

Into a beam a marshman had driven a large nail to serve, probably, as a clothes-peg. To this beam was attached a half-circular nest, the bottom of it resting on the spike, which still protruded a couple of inches beyond it. This portion served as a perch to the bird temporarily off duty, as the accumulated droppings on the floor below bore testimony to. In another instance a brick had crumbled away in the mill wall and a Swallow appropriated the vacant space, placing in one corner a nest the quarter of a circle in shape. Another erected its nest on the top of a cross-beam which was a mere circular raised rim, deeper certainly, but very like a quoit. Inside this circle was a sprinkling of grass-bents, horsehair, and a few small white feathers dropped by the marsh-ducks.

On one occasion I found a nest built saucer-shaped on a beam; it was quite detached, and my removing and replacing it did not seem much to disturb or concern the parent birds. Another, built half-circular, was attached to the main shaft of a mill, the droppings from the birds forming a complete circle on the floor, caused by the shaft turning when

the mill was in use. Of course the nest did not always stop in the same position; but it was very evident that the parents thought this nothing unusual, for they successfully saw their labours ended.

A low one-arched bridge, just above the marsh level, crosses a wide ditch at Tunstall, near Acle, a few miles from Yarmouth. The railway runs over it, and a stout iron rod bisects the arch, only a foot or two from the water. On this rod, in 1896, two pairs of Swallows balanced their nests, each very like an inverted saucepan-lid in shape. They lined them with horsehair and Rooks' feathers. On to this crazy support they fixed their nests by bracket-like attachments of mud, daubed on below as if to shore them up. Here, for all the frequent roar and rumble above, and often furious draughts below, all but one or two eggs were hatched out.

Surely an odd place upon which to attach a nest was a swinging half-door in an old disused outhouse perched upon the wind-swept sandcliffs at Scratby! The door must have swung with every puff of wind. A still more curious site was the open top of a pint mug left on the shelf of a marsh-shepherd's hut. Easy entrance was gained through a circular hole

cut for the stove-pipe. The mouth of the mug appeared to have been first crossed by grass-bents, fastened securely by mud-mortar to the edges. Upon this platform a nest as large as a shallow breakfast cup was constructed, and eggs laid therein.

A Swallow was observed flitting in and out of a mill tower as late as 25th December. The occurrence created some surprise, and on a marshman repairing to the mill, to his astonishment he found a young bird suspended from the nest by a horsehair, its leg having become entangled in a loop, which held it a prisoner. The old bird's joy on seeing its offspring released was touching; and there is every reason to believe they spent their New Year in a sunnier clime. Fortunately it had been an exceptionally mild winter, or probably both would have perished.

It is probable that to sleep under more peaceful and comfortable conditions than their parasite-haunted nesting quarters afford them, the Swallows and their kindred resort in the late summer and autumn to the extensive reed-beds margining the Broads. Here they roost by hundreds and sometimes thousands. They finish the labours of the day by taking short flights to and fro before settling for the night. A confused chattering heralds the

dawn, and before daylight has given definiteness of aspect to the mazy labyrinths of reed and rush they have already begun their daily occupation above and around. In the dim twilight they remind one of snowflakes twirling about. In August they are astir two hours after midnight.

Within a few feet of a "throw" from a water-wheel driven by a steam drainage mill a "ligger" (plank) spans a sluice connected with the river Bure. People are constantly walking over the ligger; yet in spite of this a pair of Swallows attached their nest beneath it. Surely the birds with very little trouble could have secured a far quieter as well as more comfortable site.

STRANDED ROCK-BIRDS

Few resorts of the naturalist are of greater interest to him than the tide-mark on the seashore, for there are constantly to be found there objects claiming his attention and varying with the seasons or the ever-changing moods of old Ocean. Amongst them the sports of accident and misadventure figure largely; and there is always the possibility and even probability of discovering amongst the

commonplace and familiar débris creatures of rare or curious interest. It has been my practice usually after strong northerly gales, or easterly winds of undue continuance or boisterousness, to hunt along the line of flotsam flung upon the strand by the farthest reaching billows. Most noticeable among the birds which mishap brings there are the various rock-birds, under which title may be included the Puffin, the Guillemot, the Razorbill, and the Little Auk.

In recent years the Guillemot (*Uria troile*) has been the most frequent and numerous sufferer, whereas in the 'seventies, and before, the Razorbill (*Alca torda*) preponderated. These rock-birds can hardly lay claim to the title of local birds; they are simply wayfarers brought into the neighbourhood by their persistent following of the herring, or, as in the case of the Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) and the Little Auk (*Mergulus alle*), when on migration north and south, to and from their nesting quarters. At such times when a set-in of bad weather disturbs the surface of the sea, the pelagic fishes on which they prey seek deeper waters. The birds too, buffeted by winds and waves, become exhausted and starved, and

are gradually driven shorewards, where the breakers complete their discomfiture. At such times feeble birds may be observed making spasmodic efforts to escape beyond the breaking surf, and occasionally partially succeeding, only to be buffeted again into the fatal breakers, and eventually thrown ashore dead or incapacitated. I have seen wearied-out birds sitting doubled up on the margin of the highest wave-sweep. On occasion they would make a strenuous effort and wildly scuttle into the wash and get out again, and at chance times they have taken wing, only to fall into the trough of the sea just beyond the curl of the billows. After severe gales I have found numbers strewn dead along the tide-mark, feather-bedraggled and stiff-limbed.

Guillemots found alive, and placed in an aviary, invariably die. All that I have tried to coax back into life and health have survived but a few hours, or a day or two at the outside. Even birds taken at sea under more favourable conditions cannot be made to feed, and cramming seems of little use. They scramble about for a while most awkwardly, and in nearly every case are found, with wings extended, dead upon their breasts next morning. Birds taken from their native rocks, uninjured, even

after coming on to feed, die one by one. On dissection, many birds that I have picked up on the beach have been observed to be without the least particle of fatty matter, the breastbone being very prominent, and the tissues between the flesh and the skin peculiarly "bubbled" or inflated with air.

The late Mr. J. H. Gurney records in the *Zoologist* that on 11th May 1851 vast numbers were found on the shore between Cromer and Yarmouth: "one man collecting (for manure) four cartloads, partly composed of seaweeds, but principally of dead birds."¹

LITTLE AUK.

The Little Auk too has often been a sufferer from adverse winds. The same conditions of weather apply to these as to the Guillemots; but whereas the Guillemots are seldom found dead or dying beyond the reach of the high-water mark, this little rock-bird, as if endeavouring to get beyond the fury of the elements, even makes inland, to fall eventually from exhaustion, sometimes in the oddest of places—in someone's garden, in a village churchyard, or in the roadway.

¹ *Birds of Norfolk* (Stevenson), vol. iii. p. 278.

Unlike its larger relatives, the Little Auk is a frequenter of the deeper waters, and seldom approaches the shore unless driven towards it by stress of weather; and it seems to me that it is during the period of migration that local casualties are most to be noted. From the following "notes" the reader may form his own conclusions on this subject:—

"The north-east gales of March-end (1900) were fatal to many rock-birds. On the 2nd and 3rd of April, between Yarmouth and Winterton, several Puffins and Little Auks were found stranded. The numbers noted were: 30 Little Auks, 2 Razorbills, 1 Great Northern Diver, 2 Guillemots, 20 Puffins."¹ Fifty dead Puffins, mostly immature, were counted in a three-mile walk late in previous February.

"After a week's heavy easterly winds (in March 1901), I went to Ormesby, walking home by the beach. . . . At the base of the cliffs, in places, a great deal of drift had been blown, and amongst it a number of unfortunate rock-birds. I found several Guillemots, Puffins, and Little Auks; only two or three of the former being in a state fit to bring away, their rather rapid decomposition, and

¹ The author's "notes" in *Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society*.

the onslaughts of Rooks and Crows, having spoiled them.”¹

Two Razorbills “gilled” themselves in a herring-net not far from the shore, when pursuing herrings, among which they themselves perished [8th February 1890].

On 1st January 1895 a Little Auk was shot on Breydon, and some excitement in gunning circles was created by the event. Subsequently through stress of weather Norfolk was “invaded” by weary little travellers of this species, and before the end of the month 285 had been recorded.

I met with a stuffed example of the Little Auk in March 1902, in which the white neck was continued round the occiput. Mr. B. Dye, a blind naturalist, was, as Mr. J. H. Gurney remarks, the first to notice this variation in a specimen taken a year previously. This he imagines to be the perfect winter plumage.

KITTIWAKE GULL

The least frequently seen of the smaller local gulls is the Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*); it is a

¹ The author's “notes” in *Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society*.

peculiarly marine species, spending much of its time far out at sea, and is only to be observed near shore in stormy weather, or more usually passing high overhead inland, in tumbling erratic flight. Severe gales occasionally prove too much for the bird's endurance, and at times many perish, to be presently toppled ashore and become a prey to the Hooded Crows. I found no fewer than thirty mixed up with dead Razorbills along the beach on 16th February 1890. In a day or two but mere remnants remain, the wings attached to the clean-picked sternum being found scattered here and there. In very severe and protracted frosts these fragments are again overhauled and every muscular particle left is torn out and devoured.

SWALLOW MIGRATIONS

The passing away of the Swallows in autumn to sunnier lands, where they delight to spend those months of absence from us, is, to them, a somewhat momentous matter. For days previous they have been holding twittering congress in the reed-beds at the Broad margins, varied with short periods of reflection in long black lines upon the nearest

telegraph wires; or, if in the town itself, have gathered together upon some sloping roof facing the east, as if welcoming the sun's warm rays. And yet with all this demonstration, they usually manage to slip away unobserved, and it is only on very rare occasions that we are privileged to see them actually travelling south. In the 'eighties I observed a continuous stream of Swallows flying past me, just over the housetops, forging ahead silently and swiftly. Each bird had about a cubic yard of space to himself. As this flight took place over the town I could not estimate the width of the flock, but it was an unbroken procession which continued for nearly half an hour. On 8th October 1892 I was rambling upon the northern sandhills, when I presently found myself in the midst of a similar emigration. Silently and persistently, as before, the birds trooped by, some just skimming over the maram grasses, others passing by at a higher altitude. I could have caught many easily with a landing-net. Even here I could not estimate the extent of the flock; they seemed as difficult to calculate as the flakes of a snowstorm.

It is noticeable that odd birds occasionally remain behind, probably it may be some late hatched

youngster fearful to travel; or perhaps, an old bird anxiously awaiting the fledging of a belated brood. Such birds look sadly out of place flitting to and fro before the yellowing reed-clumps in the pelting rain, or snatching at the flies dejectedly hanging around our windows, or dully resting under the eaves on the sunnier side of the house. Well into November, one year I watched, from day to day, a pair of birds feeding their progeny, which they had at length to leave to their fate. This fact may help to account for the young dead birds found now and again in the nests on the marsh-mills, or lying shrivelled on the floor, the poor weak things having fluttered out of the nest in their endeavours to follow their anxious parents. I think it was in 1895 that on Boxing Day a Swallow was shot on the Denes.

HUNGRY CROWS

During a severe spell of frost in February 1879, Breydon became almost completely frozen over, broken only here and there by a narrow "wake" in a strongly tided "run." The marshlands were covered with snow, and the Hooded Crows became



Frank S. Sullivan

WINTER

HOODED CROWS AND OYSTER-CATCHER

1000

exceedingly hungry and bold. Some wildfowl resting upon the ice attracted the attention of one of the punt gunners, who contrived, after some skilful manœuvring, to get within range of them. Pulling the trigger, he succeeded in killing a couple; but before he could manage to secure his victims a party of watchful Hoodies fell upon the ducks and began tearing them to pieces before his very eyes. Snatching up a shoulder-gun he let fly at them, laying three dead upon the ice, when he scrambled out and secured them all.

On similar occasions, when hard pressed, it is interesting to watch these sturdy birds carefully patrolling the ice and the flint walls in search of crippled or dead wildfowl; and patches of blood dotting the ice or snow, with a few scattered feathers lying about amid a confusion of crow footprints, are wonderfully suggestive. Here a Gull has been torn to pieces, and there a dead fowl. A well-defined series of double footprints, leading towards a common centre, mark where a hungry Crow alighted and walked in to help his companion. Occasionally one can discern, by a tinier blood-spot, and a very few dottings of the Hoodies' toes, where a hapless Dunlin was discovered, bolted almost, if not altogether,

whole, and the finder had departed without more ado in search of other carrion or victims.

When fairly on the hunt, the Hooded Crow will single out a Dunlin from a flock and deliberately chase it down; nor will he hesitate, when hard pressed, to skin a dead comrade and devour him. I have found the skins of Guillemots, Rooks, and small Gulls turned inside out by Crows as neatly as could have been done by a taxidermist, and certainly with greater apparent ease. And I have known a Hoodie appropriate half a cocoanut, washed up on the beach, and clean out the contents. And the vile meals this bird contentedly makes off carrion beggar description. Altogether, in this locality, the Hooded Crow is deserving of protection. I do not think the numbers visiting us to-day are so great as thirty years ago.

“Hoodie” has a decided partiality for mussels. Old Breydoners affirm that in severe weather, when the tide had fallen, and the “runs” or deeper channels were clear of ice, the Hooded Crow repaired thither and sought for these molluscs. Wrenching one from its byssus fastenings the bird would fly up to a certain height and drop it upon the hard surface of the ice, descending to devour the

contents at its leisure. Failing to smash it at the first attempt, the bird would drop it from a yet greater height until the desired end was attained. The same thing obtains in open weather, the bivalves being dropped upon the flint walls, and the broken fragments discussed upon the grass-bare apex of the "wall" above. In certain spots quite an accumulation of broken shells is to be found in the winter.

Hooded Crows are seen in considerable numbers on the "flats" when collecting for the northern flight, at March-end. Hundreds, many of them apparently paired, were seen there 31st March 1898. The latest recorded were five, on 11th May 1900. Four were seemingly trying to persuade a drooping-winged comrade to try and risk the journey. My earliest record of returning birds is 22nd June 1896, when I saw six on the marshes.

SWIFTS

It has always been a puzzle to me what becomes of the annual increase of the Swift. From my earliest remembrance some six pairs of these birds have yearly made their nesting quarters in the eaves

of an old house on the quay, facing the south, about a hundred yards or so north of the Haven Bridge. Regularly they put in an appearance about the middle of May, the dates varying slightly, according to the winds, from the 12th to 17th. In course of time about thirty individuals may be counted; and their elders' early summer sweeps and curvetings are noisily repeated by the younger members of the community. Swifts are singularly rhythmical in their merry wheelings to and fro, the whole body curving off to the right or left; or in mounting with circular rushes in unison, and as if impelled by a common impulse. In fine weather and again in stormy they are often given to vociferous screaming, as if rioting were necessary to express the joy of living their shrill notes seem to imply. Various high-flying flies appear to be their favourite prey: I have found a teaspoonful of flies stowed away in the gullet of a dead Swift. The St. Mark's Fly (*Bibio marci*) is assiduously pursued. On two occasions I have found dead Swifts on the steeple balcony, at the base of the spire of St. Nicholas Church; and in each instance the Blowfly had discovered the carcasses, a depression in the atmosphere having most probably carried the scent earthwards. The

birds had, no doubt, struck the steeple in their late evening flight. In the autumn, just before leaving, great numbers used to fly along the sandhills, covering many miles in their flight backwards and forwards.

WOODCOCK MISHAPS

The Woodcock is to-day a very uncertain visitor, much less common than in the earlier half of the last century. This, maybe, is due to the ruthless collecting of eggs which has for years gone on in its northern haunts; certainly the alteration of its one-time suitable feeding-grounds in this locality has largely tended to its banishment from here. With the early October moon Woodcock shooters used to hope for a north-westerly wind. On its first arrival it was looked for among the maram-covered sandhills, where it dropped in to rest after its fatiguing flight across the sea; and the market gardens (now mostly built upon) were a favourite resort. Lubbock¹ speaks of ten couples being shot on one occasion by one sportsman. Although I have never myself seen the bird actually arrive, I know of a number of instances where it has been seen to land: its usual

¹ *Fauna of Norfolk*, by the Rev. Richard Lubbock.

habit is to come in on bright moonlight nights. Many untoward happenings to the poor immigrant are on record. One alighted on the beach and bunched itself in a sitting attitude under the lee of a boat; there a coastguardsman espied it, promptly took off his jacket, and flung it over the bird. Another alighted on a rail on the Britannia Pier, and immediately went to sleep. An angler dropped his rod and tried to seize it, but it promptly awoke and slipped through his fingers. Two or three have from time to time dashed against the telegraph wires; in one instance so forcible was the impact that the breastbone was cut in two. A Woodcock entangled itself in some herring lint hanging against a fowl-run, and was taken out a bunch of ruffled and broken feathers. Others have been picked up tired-out in the street, one in a stable, and others in equally unlikely places. The majority of my "first arrivals" are noted between the 10th and 15th of October.

On 21st November 1900 a Woodcock, captured in a warehouse in the town, came into my possession. It became tame in a day or two, and would take worms out of the hand, pecking at my fingers petulantly if held out without food, and at the same

time uttering a not unpleasant purring note. It lived several days in my possession, and during that time partook eagerly of *Oniscidæ*, strips of fish, liver, and meat. But it gradually pined and died. I have always understood that the cock was difficult to keep in confinement, and I took great pains to prove the contrary. I have kept a great variety of species in my time, but never an easier-managed one, *save for satisfying its hunger*, and here I failed. I am satisfied that it is next to impossible to succeed in doing so, for it would require one man's time devoted entirely to digging and otherwise collecting worms for its sustenance.

The following are varying weights of this bird, which under ordinary circumstances is plump and heavy:—

November	1881	.	example	.	11 ounces.
January	17, 1890	.	„	.	15 „
„	30, 1897	.	„	.	7½ „
November	2, 1902	.	„	.	12 „
„	28, „	.	„	.	14 „

Only once have I found an undamaged dead migratory Woodcock washed up by the sea; this was on 24th December 1899—it was a small dark variety, and exceedingly fat.

INCOMING OF LARKS

Amongst the most regular and observable of the migrants arriving in autumn is the Skylark. Usually steadily, in small compact flocks, varying from half a dozen to fifty in number, they are to be seen at all hours of the day flitting overhead, at times flock succeeding flock so incessantly, that on either hand it is seldom a Lark is beyond one's vision. This occurs in October; and the bird, from what I have observed of it, prefers to start upon its journey in fairly still weather. At daybreak the advance flocks are seen trooping in, their scattered bands, in undulating flight, moving very near the surface of the sea. As the day brightens, succeeding flocks, flying still higher and higher, at length pass over, often far beyond gunshot. They fly due east to west. It is rarely they settle upon the sands, but press on to the marshlands, still flying inland without halting if the passage has not proved wearisome. At times they are glad to rest a short space on the sandhills. They do not always escape untoward changes in the atmosphere: occasionally wing-weary flocks alight upon vessels at sea, and

swarm, too, upon the lightships, the lamps of which, looming out brightly upon the dark waters, attract numbers to their vicinity, many bewildered birds striking the lanterns to their own hurt and destruction. Drizzly, murky nights are most fatal to them. On such a night a Dudgeon lightsman used to climb the lantern, and catching the birds as they flew around or struck him, wrung their necks, and filled his pockets with them. He had gathered the weary birds from the decks and rigging by the bucketful; principally his captures consisted of Larks, mixed with Starlings, Thrushes, and other birds. If let alone, the birds would sleep huddled-up till morning, and then again pursue their journey landwards. Since the lights have been made to revolve fewer birds are noticed. Lark pies used to be a regular institution on board the ships.

Long after dark the Larks may be heard trooping in, uttering their well-known call-notes in an endeavour to keep the members of the flock together. Their line of flight at night is low; after a heavy night's influx I have, at daybreak, found many birds that have been killed by striking the telegraph wires which cross the Denes. Owls, Plovers, even Ducks have been found thus

killed in this locality; and I have picked up the Pied Flycatcher.

That all the Larks do not leave Scandinavia under ordinary conditions is apparent by the fact, that during a set-in of very severe weather a smaller migration is observed. I have dates as late even as the first week in February; when exceedingly bad weather reached our shores not long behind them. Yet even as early as 20th February (1900) I have seen small bunches departing on the northward return journey, flying direct north-east.

The Larks coming to us in autumn are slightly darker birds than our own.

Contrasting strangely with the departure mentioned above I append the following "notes" taken from my diary:—

Feb. 2, 1897.—Fieldfares and Redwings coming over to-day from north-east to south-west in continuous flocks. A regular second immigration!

Feb. 3, 1897.—Larks coming over to-day by scores and scores; in fact, some big flocks. What does this portend?

In the *Eastern Daily Press* of 5th February, H. C. F. asks—

"Could any of your readers account for the

wonderful migration of Larks? Yesterday, 2nd February, from early morning until five o'clock, continual flocks of Larks were passing close to the sea-coast, coming from north-west going to south-east." [The note was signed 3rd February 1897.—Beeston Regis.]

Very wild weather with wind blowing from the south-east set in on the 7th.

FULL MEALS

A bird is apparently far more concerned about the quantity of its food than its taste or quality; indeed, so long as that food is its natural supply, its state or condition matters but little, taste having but secondary choice in the selection. I have seen gulls gorged with carrion. An immature Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) floated upstream beside the putrid carcass of a dog, out of which it pulled flesh piece after piece until it could eat no more; then it heavily took to wing, and settled directly upon a flat, to doze while digestion began and completed its work. A Gull had dropped upon the smooth surface of the sea right amongst a teeming shoal of herring-fry. It had dined so heartily that it could with difficulty

either lift itself from the water or be persuaded to do so by repeated stoning, when it flew a short way and settled just beyond arm's fling. In January 1888 two Red-throated Divers (*Colymbus septentrionalis*) were shot in the roadstead; they had been greedily devouring herring-fry, the larger bird having no less than forty-two fish in its crop, the largest one measuring seven inches in length. In July 1899 I observed a Rook busily employed upon the carcass of a stranded dog. A large "Grey" Gull, late one evening in May, was busily pulling at some object. Rowing up to it, I found the laggard making a good round meal off a dead hen.

The following notes in their original diary form may be of interest:—

Dec. 22, 1894.—Hundreds of Lapwings coming over against a strong north-west gale. Were very tired, and no doubt many were drowned *en voyage*.

Dec. 23.—Extraordinarily high tide (indeed there came up two flood-tides without an ebb between!). Breydon walls broke through near Berney Arms through the pressure of the water. Myriads of worms were drowned on the flooded marshes and in the market gardens nearer the town. Another high tide Dec. 29.

Jan. 3, 1895.—Gulls fattening on the dead (and

now putrefying) worms. There were hundreds of Blackheads, and a great number of Lapwings. They remained feeding there a week.

By way of contrast with this substantial spread of good things may be mentioned a "Grey" Gull seen enjoying himself immensely with a jelly-fish that had been stranded on a mud flat, and which he was doing his best to devour, the gelatinous fragments, clinging around and trickling from his bill, being seized and swallowed in a most awkward way. It occurred to me that he was amusing himself rather than seriously making a meal of it.

Breydon Gulls have a fine time of it during the herring fishery: much hard "tack" and mouldy bread, besides dead fish, float upstream—flung out from the fishing vessels, to the great satisfaction of the omnivorous *Laridæ*. On one occasion several large Norwegian loaves drifted up Breydon and became stranded. The Rooks and Gulls turned vegetarians for a day or two, and what few crumbs and bottom crusts they rejected or failed to gather up were finished off by the rats on the walls, whither the remnants floated.

In May 1902 a Heron, standing thigh deep in the water by the edge of a mud flat, caught and bolted

several eels and flounders. Having had his fill, he actually amused himself by capturing several others, and these, probably with a feeling of regret, he let escape again.

A great Black-backed Gull was shot by a local gunner; in its descent the wounded bird disgorged no less than eleven herrings.

On 19th June 1902, after having had their fill of carrion, a parcel of gulls, standing on a patch of grass-wrack (*Zostera marina*), in about three inches of water, amused themselves by catching the crabs that scrambled about in search of prey; with crabs in their bills, the gulls in turn rose a yard or more and dropped the astonished crustaceans into the grass again. There was no possible motive beyond the fun of the exercise that could have actuated them.

I saw a Common Gull, in July 1903, seize and swallow an eel quite a foot long. It was not an easy nor a passive resister, and for fully five minutes the contortions of the astounded fish inside the bird's crop were distinctly visible, making most grotesque swellings and writhings under the throat and breast of the swallower. With commendable determination the bird kept the eel's tail inside,

not letting it once protrude in its efforts to back out of such an unwonted place.

A Bittern was shot a few years since which appeared to be in uncommonly good plight. On dissection, however, a small pike, fourteen inches in length, was discovered in its crop.

A Great Northern Diver, disporting itself among the roach on Horsey Mere, was shot and badly wounded by a Broadland gunner. On being hauled into the boat it threw up thirty-two fish, some of them large enough to be used as bait. This was in January.

THE SOLITARY SNIPE

Every autumn the appearance of the Solitary Snipe (*Gallinago major*) was as regularly looked for, up to the late 'seventies, as was September itself. After this period, in consequence of an increased traffic upon the sandhills and in the locality around, a marked diminution became apparent. Gunners in those days went intentionally in search of them amongst the marams, where they dropped in tired with their flight. This Snipe is usually in good condition on arrival. It "laid" remarkably close, and would allow itself to be all but trodden upon

before taking to wing. In 1880 eight were shot in that neighbourhood. It has since yearly become scarcer.

HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY

As a local nester the Ringed Plover (*Ægialitis hiaticula*) was at one time well known. Fifty years ago the number of nests ran into two figures; but year by year, as traffic increased, and rifle practice still more disturbed the peace and quiet of the sandhills in the vicinity of the Old North Battery, the sitting pairs became fewer and fewer, until at the present time only three or four nests are present, although fortunately not always found. In the early 'eighties a dozen nests at the outside were counted. In 1877 an old sportsman, out with his gun in the breeding season (then not unlawful), and observing a pair of birds in a great state of alarm, diligently searched and found a nest containing three eggs—four being the usual number. Concluding they were fresh, he put them in his pocket, and on reaching home placed them in a collar box and put them on a shelf. An hour or so after, hearing "peepy" cries, his attention was naturally directed to the box, and on opening it he discovered a young bird

clear of the shell ; he placed the other eggs near the fire, and hatched these off shortly after. The poor little things were subsequently killed and "used up" by a taxidermist.

Another sportsman of my acquaintance, Mr. B. Dye,¹ who made quite a hobby of watching the habits of this species, found an unhatched egg, which he placed in wadding over the top of his oven. This was hatched ; as was, two years later, a clutch of eggs. He had observed the time of their deposit, and allowed them to remain in the nest until about four days before the young birds should make their appearance : and in a similar way they first saw the light on his oven-top. They readily fed from my fingers, accepting small earthworms, and might, I am confident, have been easily reared. A day or two after they too, poor chicks, were made into specimens surrounding a couple of stuffed adult birds.

Some of the observations made by Mr. Dye and myself may be worth recording. The site locally selected was a long level of mixed shingle and sand. A depression made by a horse's hoof, or a specially prepared hollow, was rounded off ; and what nests I have seen were lined with small white chalky

¹ Has since lost his eyesight.

stones or smooth pieces of shell less in size than a threepenny-bit. Occasionally a tuft of sand sedge or a large stone affords a little protection. Chance-time a strong northerly wind has driven the sand-drift so thickly as to completely cover and smooth over the shingle, nests, eggs, and all. Mr. Dye alleges that towards the end of incubation the eggs assume almost a vertical position; he believes it to be due to the movements of the young birds inside the shell. Sir Thomas Browne¹ remarks: "They lay their egges in the sand and shingle about june, and as the eryngo diggers tell mee, not sett them flat butt upright like egges in salt."

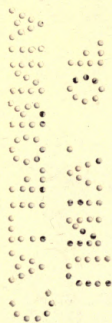
In a footnote Mr. Southwell refers to the complement of four eggs, which are arranged with their pointed ends to the centre. "The concavity of the nest, therefore, as well as the disproportionate size of the larger end, gives the eggs somewhat the appearance of being placed in the position referred to, but the small end of the egg is always visible." The eggs, as well as the stones around them, retain their heat in a remarkable degree, so that the old birds remain feeding a longer time than those who have

¹ *Natural History of Norfolk*, by Sir Thomas Browne. Edited by Mr. T. Southwell.



SUMMER

THE FRINGE OF THE SHORE—RINGED PLOVER AND COMMON TERN



not watched them would imagine. The time of incubation is twenty-eight days—from the time of laying the first egg. The young run as soon as hatched. They have a habit of squatting at a note of warning from the parent birds, and the eye, once moved from a crouching chick, almost invariably fails to see it again. So closely will a young bird skulk that one may sometimes lay a hand upon it. The young birds are very soon taken by their elders to the tide-mark, and first lessons in sandhopper-catching are taught them.

When a flock of Ringed Plovers observe anyone approaching they usually remain perfectly quiescent upon the shingle patches, neither moving nor piping. And so closely does their plumage assimilate with their surroundings that I have actually been deceived. The black of their breasts, as they faced me, on one occasion was so suggestive that I remarked to a friend—

“Look yonder: I wonder who in the world has been emptying mussel-shells upon the beach?” But the supposed empty bivalves suddenly closed as the birds, on an alarm being sounded by a sentry-bird, wheeled and ran, and directly afterwards took to flight.

THE GREY SHRIKE

That bold, fearless bird, the Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*), visits us in scanty numbers with autumnal immigrants, who, if they manage to cross the seas in anything like amity, speedily get to cross purposes on arrival. Master *Lanius* invariably arrives hungry, and it is not the fault of the bird-catchers, whose decoy-birds often attract his attention on his appearance, if he comes to grief in the meshes of a clap-net.

One was brought me by a countryman in November 1889, who had unwittingly taken it in a spring cage-trap into which it had dashed after a Lark placed in the closed compartment. This it managed to secure somehow, devouring it at once.

On 26th October 1900 a hungry Great Grey Shrike, evidently but just arrived, alighted on a tree in the heart of the town. Presently it flew at and struck a Sparrow, with which it returned to its perch; the shrieking of the unfortunate finch attracting quite an assemblage of onlookers, before whose eyes it tore its victim to pieces, and made a hasty meal of it, flying away unmolested a few minutes after.

WHEN BIRDS SLEEP

At one period of my life, when engaged in the postal service, my duties took me abroad about two hours after midnight. I noticed that the first diurnal birds to awaken were the House-Martins: before daybreak they were twittering in their nests, as if anxious to be out and doing. By three they were taking the first near-at-home flights of the day. The Sparrows were astir shortly after the hour had struck, and by half-past three most of the others had followed suit. The water and shore birds are semi-nocturnal; some, indeed, are awake and busy all night. The gulls, depending for fresh supplies chiefly on the flood-tide, or on its earliest recedence, take their naps mostly at low water. On Breydon occasionally they are babbling and noisy the night through. Black-headed Gulls are often a-wing feeding on the night flood, the phosphorescence of the fishy flotsam attracting their attention. These remarks apply to the summer months. In late autumn, when the herring shoals are off this coast, before daybreak continuous straggling flocks of large gulls, mostly "Greys,"—*i.e.* the immature of the Blackbacks and the Herring Gull,—pass along the

shore, flying low in the dim light of early morning, after their night's rest upon the coast and marshes of north and north-west Norfolk. After the day's fishing in this neighbourhood they pass along northward before sunset. At times there is a counter-movement, when the birds, having been inland all day, they pass high overhead at sunset, in huge V-like flocks, to spend their night upon the sea.

Knots, Whimbrel, Curlews, and many others, flying overhead noisily as they do, in order to keep in touch the members of their respective flocks, are heard on dark, foggy nights in the periods of migration. Their calling is heard abovehead even by dwellers in inland cities.

I have seen perching birds make the land in the autumnal migration, settle immediately upon the sands, even below high-water mark, and, tucking their heads under their weary wings, drop off to sleep in a moment. Aboard the lightships tired-out birds frequently settle upon bulwarks, ropes—anywhere, in fact, that offers foothold; huddling, too, in corners—and drop at once into profound slumber.

On 10th May 1900 a bunch of thirty Grey

Plovers alighted on a Breydon flat, and forthwith fell fast asleep, so heavily, indeed, that as the afternoon tide rose it reached up to their breasts, and would have presently floated them, had not my pushing my punt into their midst aroused them, when they awoke and flew away to some others that, having previously arrived and rested, were feeding on an adjoining flat, in company with some Whimbrel, Godwits, and smaller waders. The wind was east-south-east.

In November 1902 there were days of fog and mist, the worst possible conditions for the land-birds on their late autumn travels. The outer Dowsing lightship was, for three successive days, surrounded and swarmed by Rooks, Hooded Crows, and Jackdaws. I am inclined to think each day's visitors were fresh arrivals; although it is probable that the same flocks returned each night, attracted there by the bewildering, although friendly, beacon. Wearied to a degree, they settled by hundreds to rest and sleep. Ropes, lantern, boats, bulwarks were covered with them. On one occasion my informant estimated that at least a thousand birds were aboard; and the decks in the morning looked as if they had been whitewashed.

The Spoonbills visiting Breydon in May and June prefer a mid-morning or a mid-afternoon nap, and invariably choose to sleep in the centre of a group of gulls, and constantly standing on one leg. The Spoonbill rarely drops to a sitting position upon the mud flats. At four a.m. on 19th May 1881 Mr. B. Dye rowed almost within gunshot of five; four were asleep, while one, apparently acting as sentry, seemed more given to somnolency than wakefulness. It was the more vigilant and mistrustful gulls surrounding them that gave the alarm, and all flew away together. I myself have noticed that Spoonbills are always ready to take the gulls' hint without hesitation; and to their cautiousness, more than its own suspicions, before the days of the close protection, many a "Banjo Bill" owed his escape from certain death.

NIGHT IN THE REEDS

Margining most of the Broads, fringing long tracts by the riversides, and covering a large portion of the marshlands, are thick growths of reeds. In the snug and sheltered recesses of these mazy clumps the Bearded Tit, the Reed-Bunting, and more than one species of Warbler, build their nests and rear

their little ones. Night in the summer months is made musical by the chattering Reed-Warbler, which at intervals wakes up, to run over bar after bar of its familiar little song; and one has but to crackle through the reed-margin with an oar, or fling into their midst a bit of mud, to set bird after bird warbling its ditty of astonishment.

But to my mind the most interesting tenant of these reed-beds is the Common Starling, who gathers sometimes in large flocks, to spend in the more sheltered and secluded stretches the summer and autumn nights. Whilst one may be quietly sitting in his boat fishing, or otherwise idling in the Broadlands, one cannot fail to notice, as the afternoon sun begins to lower, compact little bunches of from ten to thirty Starlings passing overhead, making for some familiar roosting-place, from all directions, more especially from the marshlands. Flock after flock drops down into the reed-beds, the earlier arrivals noisily disputing possession with those constantly coming in. The damage done to the reeds was, in years gone by, deemed considerable, for reed-harvesting was then profitable both to owner and labourer; the latter of whom was even tempted to give up other employment to take on

this. When reeds commanded high prices from the thatcher and plasterer, there was something like a small campaign carried on against the Starlings, which were hustled out of their lodgings and repeatedly shot at. To-day they appear to be allowed to retain quiet possession. The ripple of their chatter, and the murmur of their wings in the reed-bed, remind one of the distant beating of the surf upon the seashore.

With them, in autumn, congregate hosts of Swallows and Sand-Martins, young and old together, crowded out of their all too small nests in the marsh - mills and roof - trees of the farm - sheds — and glad, too, of a respite from the onslaughts of the myriad parasites that made the old home unbearable.

The night has scarcely departed ere the Swallows flit and chatter around and above the reeds, and the Starlings, rested and hungry, betake themselves to their favourite pastures, to return at eventide to repeat these manœuvres; and do so until winter compels them to seek more safe and sheltered roosting-places than the sere, brittle, leafless stems that jostle and crackle and break in the wintry blast.

TURTLE DOVES

One of my most interesting memories is of the days when, as a lad, I used to wander among the thick-spreading furze that, up to the 'seventies, smothered the North Denes. In the "holls" or depressions between the heaps of blown sand, crowned by a luxuriant growth of the yellow-flowered furze, might often be seen small flocks of Turtle Doves (*Turtur communis*), more often in the early morning before their greatest enemy was afoot with gun and bad intent. Mistle Thrushes and Wood Pigeons, too, came with them, to hunt for food—of what kind I could not imagine, unless it was for the succulent leaves of the sea bindweed and the great seedpods that later on followed the pale pink trumpet-shaped flowers. Thrushes, too, came in search of the *nemoralis* crawling among the grass while the dew was still upon it. I have seen over twenty Doves in a flock. Whinchats, Stonechats, and Wheatears nested then in some numbers, as did occasional Common and Red-legged Partridges. But it was the low, plaintive, melancholy *coo-coo* of the Turtle that always tempted me to watch him, in preference to all the others; for the thoughts of his far-away home in

sacred Palestine, and the associations of the bird with what I had read and reread of him in the Scriptures, encircled him with a halo of romance. The levelling of the sand dunes by the golfer, and the incursion of the railway, and many other untoward circumstances, has entirely banished the Turtle Dove. However, in the more wooded districts it appears to be on the increase.

I saw a Turtle Dove in 1882 that had been caged for twelve years. Some beautiful hybrids between Tumbler Pigeons and the Turtle Dove were produced in the aviary of a resident several years in succession.

NESTING OF SAND-MARTINS

The last Sand-Martin's nest within the immediate neighbourhood of the town was in 1881 placed in a hole in a broken sandhill at the rear of an old windmill on the North Denes, within a few yards of where now stands the golf-house. It is strange that, notwithstanding the increased traffic to and from the Naval Reserve drill sheds, the persistency of bird-nesting urchins, and the like, the birds persevered in nesting there so late even as that. Other nesting locations have been all but deserted in late years.

Some scores of birds were turned out at Gorleston when the cliff slopes facing the sea were levelled and brought under cultivation; and the great falls of cliff at Scratby, caused by sea-storms, have ousted a colony there. Fortunately, railway cuttings offer greater security, and have been chosen by the Sand-Martins, whose numbers do not appear to have suffered the decrease observed in kindred species. Beyond Gorleston, towards Corton, the nest-holes of the Sand-Martins are still tenanted in the summer months. In July 1890 I counted seventy-one in an area of some twenty-four square yards. From their shallowness it seemed that some borings had been begun and given up because of an obstructive stone or a furze root; or some caprice of the little miner had made it suddenly decide upon another site. Most of the tenanted burrows were situated at least eighteen inches from the abrupt top of the sand-cliff, and were protected somewhat by overhanging furze. It was hard work climbing and crawling up the crumbling slope to inspect the colony, for the loose sand gave way at every step, and necessitated three efforts to make one actual advance. The borings were more than arm's length, and not a nest could be touched; but some urchins had been

amusing themselves by inserting long bramble stems, which they had wormed around in circular fashion, and having caught the nests on the hook-like thorns, had pulled them out. The nests were built or tumbled together of dried *Flustra foliacea*, picked up from the beach below, and lined with small white Gull feathers gleaned in the same locality.

The queerest nesting-place of Sand-Martins I have seen was at Thorpe, in holes in a brick wall, the foundations of which are lapped by the waters of the Yare. The tenants popped in and out, evidently as satisfied with their mansions as any of their friends who had chosen the drier sand holes in a sand-pit.

I like the Sand-Martin: he is a silent, confident little fellow. He is the hardiest of his race, and puts on no airs. He is the best of company when one chooses to tramp along through the rank grasses topping Breydon walls; when for mile after mile a muster of them continue flitting around, like a swarm of gigantic bees, snapping up, often within arm's length, the dipterous insects brushed out of the grass by the pedestrian. Again in autumn this Martin flits around you along by the seashore, especially if you are near to the tide-mark, where

the sandflies and other insects are making merry upon the refuse stranded by the sea—whipping them up as they spring away at your advance.

IDENTIFICATION OF BIRDS

The spread of bird literature, and the more systematic, scientific formation of private collections of birds, have done much towards the furtherance of our knowledge of the comings and goings of many species, and of the occurrence of others hitherto rarely, or never before, noticed or recorded. It is remarkable that several of the rarest specimens that I have known occur have fallen to the guns of either exceedingly illiterate persons, or sportsmen who, from inexperience and stupidity, scarcely deserve the names. For instance, a lad in September 1883 tramped along Breydon walls, and was about to cross on to the railway and make for home, when it occurred to him, not having seen a bird to shoot at, to knock over the first sparrow he came across in order to empty his fowling-piece. He observed a small bird near by, and shot at it, killing it. It turned out to be a rather "funnier" thing than he had hitherto handled, and it was

passed on to a naturalist to name, who identified it as a Bluethroat (*Cyanecula suecia*). In September 1881 a local gunner killed six small birds, and learned after he had cooked them that they were Little Stints (*Tringa minuta*). In the earlier half of the last century an old naturalist, who had a great liking for eating birds, did a similar thing with a Red-breasted Goose (*Bernicla ruficollis*), and immediately after was chagrined in seeing the feathers identified as those of the species named. A Pallas's Sand-Grouse on the North Denes sandhills was thought to resemble a rat, and a gunner killed it and sold it to a dealer for half a crown. Many instances of spoiled specimens might be noted, and many others of birds identified by competent individuals, after "hairbreadth" escapes from destruction.

Nowadays, however, "naturalists" are on the alert for curious captures, either in bird-nets or by shooting; and nothing exhibiting unusual coloration or strange markings and characteristics is passed over before one or more have sat in judgment upon it. Nor does the fortunate possessor part with it until the market price, for him, has reached its highest limit.

In recent years the local bird-catchers have learned to recognise certain interesting birds—I will not say rarities, because careful observation has proven them otherwise. The American Shore-Lark (*Otocorys alpestris*) was thought exceedingly rare until 1876, when an educated gunner made the discovery of its frequent appearance. He shot several that year. And although subject to variation in numbers, scarcely a year goes by but a number are now observed and captured.

A rather covetous gunner shot nineteen one morning in 1882; another, in October 1880, observing a flock of six, killed them all one after the other. They were stupidly tame, like Dotterel; the survivors settled not far off after each discharge of the gun. The Shore-Lark is sociable in its habits, affecting the society of Snow-Buntings; amongst these, too, the Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius lapponicus*) is usually noticed. Migrants of the last-named species also arrive almost every winter. In October and November 1892 over fifty were taken and shot; since then the bird-catchers, who easily distinguish its more silvery note from the call of the Snow-Bunting, do their best to capture it, with only too much success.

The adventures attendant on a "stranger's" capture are sometimes interesting. A Caspian Plover (*Ægialitis asiatica*) was knocked over on the North Denes, and its murderer left it at a house, where the mistress threw it on the top of the clock, to be out of the way of the cat. It was taken down, dusty enough, and shortly after identified, and has since been permanently lodged in Norwich Museum.

An old punt gunner, recently deceased, used to be exceedingly painstaking in seeking the Kentish Plover (*Ægialitis cantiana*), locally known as the "Alexandrine" Plover. He would closely scan, in the spring migration, every little group of small waders, in order to detect this species, whose mode of progression reminded him, as he expressed it, "of a mouse a-runnin'." He was the only man I knew who could distinguish it by this from its cousin the Ringed Plover. It is impossible to distinguish it in the autumn from the young of the commoner bird, owing to its similarity of markings at that period, at least when on the move beside some Breydon "run." It is easy, of course, to identify the bird when in the hand.

Stevenson relates an interesting incident where

old John Bessey—the reputed best shot with a punt gun that ever worked Breydon—who in May 1827 shot a pair of Collared Pratincoles (*Glareola pratincola*) on Breydon wall. They were so dirty and besmeared with blood that the wife of Harvey, a noted game dealer, washed them as she would stockings, and hung them on a pole to dry! Harvey gave twenty shillings for them, and obtained, even after the rough treatment to which they had been subjected, no less than £7.

A Ferruginous Duck (*Fuligula nyroca*) hung amongst other ducks on Durrant's stall in Yarmouth market-place on October 1894. It was passed and repassed during the day by several "bird-men," and was then accidentally recognised by a local skin-dealer, who was "feeling" the fowl in a casual, cook-like manner.

Some years ago, before the allotments were drained and made into suitable grazing marshes, an old gunner named Sampson used to go flighting there at eventide. In the dusk there came towards him what he took to be a Heron. He fired at and killed it, and paid no more heed to it than flinging it down beside another bird or two previously shot, notwithstanding he had casually noticed its flight was

more "sharp and pigeon-like" than a "Hernsher's." He flung it into the coalhouse, where it was found in the morning by his sister, who shovelled it up with the coals. It was much ruffled, and afterwards sold for two shillings to Watson, a game dealer, who recognised it as a fine Bittern.

The bagging of any wildfowl may be looked upon as a matter of accident, for, unlike a sportsman counting with some degree of certainty his game before shooting it in a partridge preserve, the shore gunner trusts entirely to chance for what may fall in his way. Even here certain calculations are possible, dependent on the wind and other like circumstances; but it is notorious that all our rarest visitors have been met with when altogether undreamt of. Some years ago a young gunner let fly at what he thought to be a Lark, finding afterwards the strange-looking specimen in his hand to be the first recognised locally shot example of the Shore-Lark. In recent years a gunner on Breydon, coming home empty-handed, found his cartridge had jammed. Rather than take the gun ashore loaded, he thought he would shoot at the first Gull that went by, in the hope that the cartridge might possibly explode—which it did. Subsequently the bird, which had

been stuffed for a Herring Gull, was discovered to be the Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus cachinnans*), a species new to the British list.

THE GREY WAGTAIL

The similarity of the Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla melanope*) to its congeners, and the comparatively little notice given to the various species by local gunners, may account for the infrequency of its recognition. The Messrs. Paget refer to it as not uncommon in winter—the season of the year when it is to be met with. It was often met with near the town refuse-heaps by the side of the Bure—since built upon—where various insects and grubs were almost certain to be met with all winter through. The bird's comparatively longer tail, and more dipping flight, attracted the attention of an observant young gunner, who secured examples. A striking habit of the species is its propensity for persistently frequenting certain resorts; if constantly disturbed, it invariably returns to the same locality. The presence of some small crustaceans near my boathouse doors on Christmas Day 1899 attracted a Grey Wagtail, which, although repeatedly disturbed

in order to test this predilection, came back time after time.

A JANUARY IMMIGRATION

On 18th January 1881 raged a most disastrous gale, when amid snow and storm many vessels were wrecked on Yarmouth beach. The day before was intensely cold, so much so that the large pebbles, still moist from the retreating waves, froze over, and with each wetting the ice formed a thicker incrustation, until they looked like nodules of pure ice. On that date a marked inrush of small land-birds took place. Thousands of Fieldfares and Redwings simply poured in, and for an hour or so they came on like a huge feather snowstorm. They passed almost within arm's length, bewildered, ruffled, and exhausted. I shot some Redwings; they were exceedingly poor. Various Finches, Linnets, Red-poles, Twites, and the like were to be distinguished; many dropped upon the sand, huddled in ruts made by the passing of cart-wheels, fell asleep at once, and were to be picked up by hand. A Sparrow, that I recognised by sight, called my attention to his incoming by his familiar call-note.

A BIRD DISASTER

Exceedingly rough weather prevailed during the period of migration in September 1881. An unprecedented immigration of raptorial birds took place just prior to the weather reaching its severest. During the second and third week in the month Buzzards, Harriers, and Hawks were reported in all directions. On the morning of the 24th I went for a walk along the north beach, and was surprised to find, scattered here and there on the tide-mark, a number of dead birds. I picked up three Sparrow-Hawks; in the crop of one only I discovered a few fragments and some feathers of a perching bird. Three Common Buzzards, a Marsh-Harrier, and a Razorbill were also found, but all so mauled and bedraggled by the storm as to be useless for preservation. Quite a series of mishaps occurred to such as arrived alive. Many were shot; a Sparrow-Hawk struck a gas-lamp in a row, and was found stunned; and a Buzzard injured itself by flying against the signal-light on the Sailors' Home. Several Honey-Buzzards were shot, one in the act of robbing a hive in an orchard.

DO PARTRIDGES MIGRATE?

The invariable answer of well-informed naturalists is in the negative.

In my boyish days, when the North Denes were covered with a luxurious growth of furze, the Red-legged Partridge (*Caccabis rufa*) frequently nested there. And, moreover, it was the common practice of boys, in the month of April, to go on to the Denes and maram hills in search of exhausted "Frenchmen," and not seldom, in the latter half of that month and early in May, a few birds were secured by hand after a scampering chase. Early in April 1882 several flew in *from direct east, with an easterly wind*, and some were captured. In 1877 a number of these birds "dropped" in the vicinity of the town; one actually, which I saw, alighted amongst some furniture exposed for sale in the market-place, and afforded a most delightful hunt, to the great detriment of chairs and tables, and the discomfiture of their owner. I eventually secured the prize, and this, with another just captured, lived happily, until killed by rats in my back garden. It was the general belief of the gunning fraternity in those days that these birds came directly over-seas.

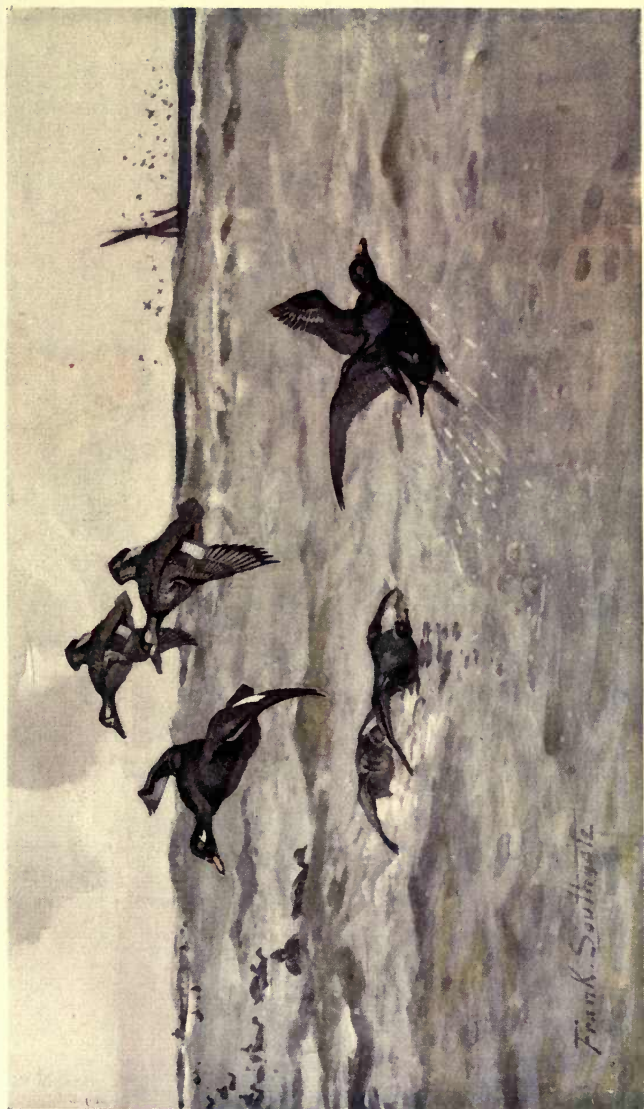
Against this belief must be placed the fact, according to Sir Thomas Browne,¹ that in his day "the French Red-legged Partridge is not to be met with." It was introduced into East Anglia by the Marquis of Hertford and Lord Rendlesham in or about the year 1770. Another consignment was turned out in 1823. Booth² mentions that in early spring numbers are frequently picked up drowned in the Norfolk Broads, and that the natives look upon them as fresh arrivals. He says, "I myself, having often noticed their quarrelsome disposition, believe that while flying in pursuit of one another over the water, they become confused, and falling, are unable to regain the shore." Stevenson³ took considerable pains to attempt a satisfactory solution of the matter, and gives instances of the bird being found on beach and Denes, both at Yarmouth and Cromer. One observer "flushed a covey of from twenty to thirty, which flew round once or twice and then out to sea, still keeping on in a direct course until he lost sight of them, although

¹ *Natural History of Norfolk*, p. 23. Edited by T. Southwell, 1902.

² *Descriptive Catalogue of Birds*, p. 84.

³ Stevenson's *Birds of Norfolk*, vol. i, p. 413.

using a good glass." A Mr. Mayes informed Stevenson "that they come over about the middle of March or beginning of April; the wind mostly south-east and south. I have seen them when I have been out to sea *four and five miles* from land." Probably the theory propounded by Stevenson may be the right one after all, where he suggests a wandering instinct in this partridge, and attempts at leaving our shores. "These birds," he says, "or a portion of them at least (some, probably, falling short and being drowned at sea), misjudging the distance and their own powers of flight, would return again to our shores in an exhausted state, and when picked up under such circumstances, would very naturally be regarded as foreigners just arrived on the coast." I have on one or two occasions only found dead examples on the beach. It may be urged that the excessive weight of the birds, when compared with their seeming feebleness of wing, would prevent a long flight across seas; but the same might be said with regard to the Quail, which is an annual, although, in this locality, lessening immigrant.



SMACK PUTTING UP COMMON AND VELVET SCOTERS

THE COMMON SCOTER

In severe winters considerable numbers of Common Scoters (*Edemia nigra*) may be observed frequenting the roadstead north of the Britannia Pier. Sometimes in a long straggling line a large flock is seen bobbing upon the waves, drifting with the tide, sleeping, feeding, or preening as the case may be, occasionally joining up in flight, winging northwards for a mile or more, and settling again, to drift townwards, and rarely inshore, until the hopeful gunner is half tempted to draw bead upon them. It is an exceeding rare circumstance for one to be caught napping; odd birds taking to Breydon are now and again shot in snowy weather. The "bottom," sandy and shifting as it is, has in places beds of molluscs, for which these birds remain in the neighbourhood. In one place nearly a mile of mussel ground is known, and in places, notably in the Ham at Gorleston, a large area is frequented by the radiated trough shell (*Macra stultorum*). The mussel referred to is *Modiola modiolus*, locally known as the horse mussel.

During a short spell of calm weather early in the 'eighties a gunner carted his gunpunt across the

town from Breydon, and launched forth from the beach to try his hand at a shot at the Scoters. After some manœuvring he managed to get within shot of the crowd. They, however, appeared a trifle too sharp for him, and dived safely out of harm at the very clink of the hammer; but two Velvet-Scoters (*Edemia fusca*), not so wary, fell to the discharge, and were secured. The scared Scoters allowed him to take no further liberties. It is curious that the Velvet-Scoter occasionally mixes with the commoner species, and in their company, too, the Long-tailed Duck (*Harelda glacialis*), usually immature, is sometimes seen, driven southwards also by the severity of the weather. A Velvet-Scoter entangled itself in a herring-net in October 1893.

FISHERMEN SPORTSMEN

In the palmier days of the trawl-fishing at Yarmouth, when so many "little masters" (the skipper occasionally being owner himself) owned a fishing smack, and short voyages, known as "single-boating" (in contradistinction to those which sailed in "fleets" and kept afloat for weeks), were taken, many a skipper carried his gun to sea with him, on the

chances of having a little sport. When the gun licence and close season became more burdensome, the practice was gradually discontinued. Not a few interesting birds in this way came into the hands of local dealers. In January 1881, during severe weather, a smack-master got well in amongst a number of Glaucous Gulls (*Larus glaucus*), securing no less than twenty-seven. These were thrown on the ice, and kept fresh enough until his arrival in port. An amusing circumstance is attached to the disposal of the dead gulls. Two local dealers in natural objects boarded the boat together, one going below, the other remaining on deck. It would be unnatural to suppose that he who was in the hold choosing the birds he wished for picked the least valuable specimens; therefore the most mature examples were handed up to the deck, where he supposed they would become his. But to his amazement, he who had remained on deck was in lawful possession of them, having paid the skipper ere his rival below could come up to claim them.

These fishermen-sportsmen sometimes took a big curly-coated retriever to sea with them, finding the animal useful in recovering wounded and dead birds,

which included such species as Fulmar Petrels, Skuas, various ducks, and the like. An immature Gannet in the peculiarly spotted plumage of youth was always a desideratum, the fishermen even on occasion going to the expense of its preservation as an ornament for their parlours. In several houses to-day, old rusty muzzle-loaders are to be found hanging up over the mantelpiece, valued heirlooms, although useless and obsolete.

Another amusement used to be the capturing of live gulls by means of twirling astern a long tarry cord. The birds tamely hovering around in the wake of the vessel would become entangled by their flight feathers in the string, when they were dragged aboard. I once saw a number of Kittiwakes taken in this manner.

Up to the middle of the 'seventies the Storm-Petrel was a well-recognised annual visitor to the neighbourhood; up till that time the herrings, which were then caught by the now obsolete three-mast luggers, were landed on the beach in huge unwieldy boats known as "ferriers," the luggers remaining at anchor in the roadstead. Much offal was thrown overboard, as it did not then pay to bring it ashore to be sold as manure; and not a few

“swills” of prime herrings would be spilled overboard too, in rough weather. This circumstance offered a great attraction for the inshoring of many species of fish and of sea-birds. Amongst them came the Skuas and the Storm-Petrels. It was usual for the “carriers” to trail soft roes (milts) of herrings behind by means of string. At these the hungry little birds would swoop, to be knocked down by long osier wands, carried for the purpose. It was probably a love of “sport” rather than the paltry twopence offered per bird by the local game dealers which induced the men to thus encompass the destruction of the unfortunate birds.

To-day the herrings are landed a mile up-river at the Fishwharf; the offal is put ashore too, as a profitable “extra”; and although gulls in some numbers muster up yearly for a share of the spoil, the Storm-Petrel is only a casual visitor, unless driven hither by exceptionally bad weather, when, as mentioned by Booth in his *Rough Notes*, during the continuance of a most severe easterly gale in November 1872, hundreds were seen off the harbour mouth. The gale began on the 11th. On the 18th the sea had become as smooth as glass, and Mr. Booth steamed in a tug through many hundreds

fast asleep on the water. On the 20th they had nearly all disappeared.

FORAGING ROOKS, CROWS, AND GULLS

There is constantly a certain amount of animal matter to be found floating in rivers polluted by sewage matter, besides the sundry insects and small creatures blown or tumbled into them by accident; while from the town drains kitchen fragments are washed down sinks and gulleys to the streams. This flotsam is ever a temptation to numerous gulls, which in certain localities assemble to pick up such unconsidered trifles. The entrance of Breydon estuary has been a happy hunting-ground from time immemorial. Here are to be seen congregated at times numerous Black-headed Gulls, Common Gulls, and larger species—the “grey” immature of the Herring and Saddleback Gulls in particular. The flood-tide draws the birds together, and great is the commotion if some wasteful mariner, tired of mouldy or stale ship-bread, has thrown overboard some, to him, obnoxious loaves. In a constant mazy flight, squealing and squabbling, the birds work to and fro; now gleaning singly, as some

toothsome bit catches the sharp wandering eye, and now clustering in a noisy, quarrelsome group as some larger edible attracts the notice of several simultaneously.

The smaller particles are snatched up as neatly as Swallows catch at passing insects, the end of the mandibles and the ends of the toes scarce touching the water ere the bird has "bevelled itself" upwards again as it were by the force of the impetus that brought it down. A heavy or brittle substance, such as a large bit of bread, makes diversion by its breaking and falling, to be snatched at again probably by a trio or half a dozen rivals. Sometimes a bird settles upon the water and feeds upon its "find" as the tide floats them along together.

In amongst the gulls, on similar intent, may be seen Rooks, whose methods are slightly different, for they are more fearful of an immersion. Petty quarrels are often struck up a-wing between the corvine gleaners and the gulls.

On 17th November 1901, just off the "half-mile point" on Breydon, some five hundred Black-headed Gulls were fishing along the "tide-line," a perceptible dividing line between the up-running stream and an eddy caused by a projecting "wall." They were

vivaciously hunting in their light, airy, frolicsome manner. Amongst them were several Hooded Crows dipping and wheeling, and exactly mimicking their web-footed companions, than whom, however, they tired more quickly; and so retired every now and again for a few minutes' rest on a mud flat across the channel. It was pretty to see the gulls trotting, as it were, now and again upon the surface, scarcely dipping their toes; while the heavier crows, with big feet hanging helplessly, dipped them, so to speak, ankle deep, and needed a more spasmodic and laborious effort to rise than their lighter-pinioned companions. A quantity of refuse bread, fragments of fish from some Scotch boats moored in the river, and other like flotsam, afforded the birds a goodly repast.

There was a long dry spell in the summer of 1893. The birds, depending upon ground grubs, worms, and the like, fared badly, the Rooks in particular being in sorry plight. Early one morning, when rambling about the North Denes, I saw a Rook unusually busy, and exceedingly erratic in its movements. To get a closer view I cut down a large bunch of prickly comfrey growing near by, and spreading the leaves as a fan-shaped screen before

me, managed to crawl within a short distance of the unsuspecting bird. From behind a furze bush that I managed to reach unobserved, I had a good look at him. A number of grasshoppers skipped merrily around me; and I found it was in quest of this very insect the Rook had come. I could not only quite easily observe him snatch at and capture the grasshoppers,—a lively performance, in all conscience,—but I could also see that a portion of his bill had been shot away. This seemed not in the least to inconvenience him. I could almost imagine there was a gleam of satisfaction in his beady eye at falling in luck's way, and in having a feast all to himself.

The gathering together of a large number of birds of the same species where suitable food has unexpectedly and abundantly turned up, convinces me that not only do individual birds possess remarkably keen sight, but that a means of communication exists among them. A rough easterly sea had thrown on to the north beach a quantity of live razor shells (*Solar ensis*). The gathering of gulls that mustered as soon as the coast was clear afforded a lively and interesting sight. So long as the supply lasted they did not disperse.

There was to be seen, for many years, the wreck of a steamboat nearly opposite the north battery. This was covered with a mass of sea-anemones and other marine creatures. Certain tides of unusual strength occasionally washed off a number of these "hangers on," and the gulls—Herring Gulls in particular—would at low water and at the early part of the tide muster in some numbers and glean up whatever edible came to hand.

The Herons frequenting Breydon spend much of their time watching for and capturing eels. The patience with which they will stand, rigid and motionless, for many minutes together, is as remarkable as their celerity and accuracy of aim in striking and seizing an eel unfortunate enough to come within reach. A Heron on one occasion struck and secured an eel not far short of a pound and a half in weight—which would be somewhat thicker than a broom handle. He had a regular tussle with it, and might eventually have mastered and devoured it, had not two Hooded Crows attacked him, making him drop it upon the mud flat, when they descended, with the intention of appropriating it for themselves. They had already disembowelled it when a Breydoner rowed up and landed, putting them to flight. The

old man picked up the hapless eel, took it to his houseboat, and cooked it for his dinner. He chuckles to this day when relating how the Heron obliged him by catching a fine eel for him.

SOME SWAN NOTES

The various species of Wild Swans usually visit us in very hard winters; occasionally so many have been seen as to mark the year as a "swan year." In other winters not a Swan is seen. During a very sharp and protracted frost in January 1879, I counted in two flocks fifty-three Whoopers (*Cygnus musicus*). They were wheeling in an unsettled and distrustful way around Breydon, far above gunshot, to the annoyance of quite a regiment of punt and shore gunners who were hiding and skulking eager for a shot. Not one was killed. In March odd birds and small flocks are occasionally observed passing northward. The note of this bird, as I have heard it, seems to me to resemble a very bad imitation of the Curlew's. As far as I have been able to note the appearances of Swans, the Bewick's Swan (*C. bewicki*) occurs more frequently, although not in such large flocks: certain seasons have seen on

the poulterers' stalls only birds of this species. Mr. Booth (*Catalogue of Birds*) speaks of having seen at one time between fifty and sixty flying in company over Hickling Broad.

In October 1881 the late John Thomas, punt gunner, bagged three Swans to a shot from his swivel-gun, and two others immediately after to a shoulder-gun. They were swimming about tamely and unconcernedly on Breydon. Delighted with his prowess, "Johnny" made haste for home, where, on hooks outside the shop window, they were soon seen hanging; and in front of the shop the gunner proudly paraded. On calling his attention to the fact that they were tame, escaped birds, he hastily pulled them down, and disappeared inside with them.

In the old days, when the allotments were yet a watery waste, Swans dropped in and were stalked from behind a borrowed horse or donkey, several of which were usually to be found feeding upon the higher portions of this marshy waste.

On 25th October 1890 I saw three Polish Swans (*C. immutabilis*) hanging on Durrant's stall in the market. Reporting the same to Mr. T. Southwell, F.Z.S., he wrote, "Did you notice the colour of the

feet?” I immediately obtained leave to cut off a bit of one bird’s foot, and my knife, slipping “with malice aforethought,” I managed to take pretty well a whole foot off at once! The pale greenish line down each claw of the foot had attracted my attention to the birds. Mr. Southwell’s reply is conclusive as to the certainty of this Swan’s claim to distinction as a species—

“Thanks for your letter of 31st October and for the enclosures; but I fear you will get into trouble with Durrant. I am nevertheless glad to get the bird’s toes. I quite forgot whether I thanked you for the coloured drawing of the Swan’s head. It appears to me very characteristic, and the foot is no more like the colour of *Cygnus olor* than it is like a Duck’s.”

I have met with the Polish Swan on more than one occasion.

TRAPPING EXTRAORDINARY

During several mild days in January 1883 Golden Plovers and Lapwings congregated on the marshes in some numbers, where their wariness gained them immunity from mishap at the hands of the gunning fraternity. But some boys, becoming conversant

with the favourite resorts of these birds, fixed a number of small steelfalls thereabouts, with the result that a considerable capture was made. A row of these broken-legged Plovers attracted my attention as they hung on Durrant's stall, where I was informed of the trick successfully carried out by the urchins.

Prior to the 'sixties, when Ringed Plovers were more abundant on the then less-frequented north beach, bird-limed sticks were placed around a nest in a triangular fashion; to these the old birds became easily fastened, and were at once secured.

At that period, during long droughts, the Rooks used to frequent the allotments, which were never without puddles, or "pulk-holes." Pieces of brown paper were made into cones, like sugar bags, and holes being made in the turf, these bags were inserted. The inside having been smeared with bird-lime, and a few grains of corn dropped in, the trapper hid himself. The hungry Rooks, glad enough to find something that promised a wholesome meal, eagerly dipped into the cones to get at the corn, when an attempted withdrawal of the beak brought the paper hood up with it. The terrified birds would fly straight into the air, but

being blinded, soon came to grief; occasionally they would strike the ground with sufficient force to stun themselves, and so become an easy capture.

On one occasion a gunner named Hurr was out shooting at the harbour mouth when he espied a Glaucous Gull, which persistently kept out of gunshot. Having a ball of string in his pocket, he proceeded to make a "hake" as follows: Picking up a stranded herring, he cut it down the back like a kipper, and removed the backbone and entrails, filling the space thus made with a piece of cork float—which, with herrings, are usually to be found in that locality in the fishing season. Having closed the fish and roughly fastened it together, he attached a piece of string weighted at the end with a stone. Another and longer cord was attached thereto, to be held by the hand. A couple of fish-hooks were then fastened to the fish, and the bait slung out just beyond the breakers, Hurr running to hide behind some fish baskets stranded on the beach. The Glaucous Gull, espying the herring, swooped down upon it, when one hook, instead of fastening into the throat of the bird, caught it by the nostrils, and it was easily hauled ashore and secured. "Hakes" were not rare traps at that period.

More recently, a countryman at Tunstall, who has successfully tried some remarkable experiments in capturing stoats, otters, coots, jackdaws, and other creatures alive, caught a number of Rooks. He stated they boldly entered his hen-coops to steal eggs, *which they carried away in their feet!* So he declared! He consequently baited the hen-coops with maize, to the shortly-enjoyed delight of the depredators, who reached the maize by squeezing in below, through an aperture left for their ingress. When the man deemed the coops sufficiently tenanted he hurriedly showed himself. The birds, naturally alarmed, forgot the only way of escape below, and poking their heads excitedly out through the higher apertures, became an easy prey. At one time, the man avows, he took ten Rooks in one coop!

In January 1891 I saw a Common Snipe, with both legs broken, hanging on a poulterer's stall. On inquiry, I found that a country lad, who was more than half a poacher, had watched this species, and observing its frequent footprints in a moist corner, set for it a steelfall, with an unlucky result to one bird at least. He similarly watched the Woodcock, and in this way trapped one; but a cat was before

him, and on going to examine his traps he found only the bird's legs. A number of Lapwings frequented a marsh up the North River in November 1893, and advantage was taken of this by some lads, who set rat-traps in order to catch them. While the eager gunners could not get within range of them, the boys filled their handkerchiefs with game. Several of the victims, injured in one or both legs, were brought to market for sale, where I examined them.

In the winter of 1901 I noticed unusual numbers of Blackbirds in the market. Now, this sable fellow is known to be good eating, especially in the depth of winter, when, no matter how severe the weather, he is always fat and in good condition. Big bunches are taken from the stalls by lovers of this small game long before the Moorhens and Lapwings brought to market by market-gardener sportsmen, who seldom aim at providing more distinguished game-birds. I made inquiries, and found that in certain villages old herring-nets had been placed above the raspberry canes, and Blackbirds were attracted beneath them by rotten apples strewn about as bait. When disturbed, the frightened birds, instead of flying away in a horizontal direc-

tion, excitedly flew upwards, becoming sadly entangled in the meshes of the nets, and were easily captured.

THE CORMORANT

The Cormorant, only a few years ago, was by no means a rare bird in this locality: even in my recollection it has become much scarcer than formerly, when as an ardent youth I delightedly watched it perched upon the top of a stake on Breydon, resting, or preening its feathers. Old gunners speak of having seen several stakes occupied at a time by quite a party of these birds, their quest being the various fishes swimming over the flats that were at that time so little "grown up" that water usually covered them even at low tide, or was absent but for a very short period. The Grey Mullet (*Mugil capito*) was a favourite prey of the Cormorant.

In Sir Thomas Browne's¹ time the Cormorants nested at Reedham "upon trees whence King Charles the first was wont to bee supplied." In Lubbock's² time it still nested around Fritton Decoy

¹ *Natural History of Norfolk*, p. 11. Southwell's edition.

² *Fauna of Norfolk*, by the Rev. R. Lubbock, 1845.

in some years in numbers; in other years not a nest was to be seen. They appear sometimes to have usurped the Heron's nest; but to-day neither Heron nor Cormorant are found there. The Pagets¹ referred to it as "Common."

Tolerant as the large gulls are of the Spoonbill's society, they seem to draw the line at that of the Cormorant. One I saw alight on a flat in proximity to some two hundred gulls was bullied, and fled from in turn by them with the utmost excitement, willing as the bird itself seemed to be to fraternise. The gulls eventually left it.

A live Cormorant was brought to me in March 1900, and turned into a wired enclosure, when it immediately mounted a heap of stones and made itself at home. In two or three days it recognised its fish-basket, and in a week's time would catch its fish, when thrown to it, with remarkable accuracy, trumpeting its approval in strange harsh notes. "Joey" soon learned to distinguish my voice, and to judge of my intentions. He gave decided preference to whittings, whiting heads being even more acceptable than cut-up flounders. Gurnards were

¹ *Sketch of the Natural History of Great Yarmouth*, by C. J. and J. Paget, 1834.

preferred to herrings. After having his fill, he would hop on to a favourite stone and resume his usual occupation—meditating. If, at one o'clock, he was surfeited with some four or five whittings, the tail of the last one still protruding from the corner of his bill, for want of room, at two o'clock he was, like Oliver Twist, "asking for more," and could easily swallow a couple of others. Digestion was remarkably rapid; 3 to 4 lbs. of fish were devoured daily. He did not vomit the bones of fish, as did my tame shag; his "mill," indeed, "grinding exceeding small." I never saw him attempt to drink, although his plumage was kept clean and well groomed, and a dropping of water after meals was always noticeable at his mandible-tip. He did not protest, however, against water being thrown over him.

In May the passing over of a Cormorant, just within my vision—and his—greatly disturbed him, and he commenced, and kept up for days, a frequent hop round his establishment, from stone to stone, and to a stunted tree-trunk, carrying small faggots in his mandibles, as if suggesting to himself the delights of housekeeping.

Seventeen were seen on 19th May 1892 on Breydon.

HOW DID THEY FEED?

Under ordinary conditions a bird needs all his faculties awake and complete in order to get a respectable living; and one so unfortunate as to become maimed, or that is naturally malformed, must be seriously handicapped in the struggle for existence. In December 1883 I saw a Hooded Crow whose upper mandible overlapped its lower one, curving downward with a more decided bend than that of a Crossbill's, the under mandible being normally shapen and responsible for the work of grubbing in those places where food had to be found when carrion was scant. Equally odd was a Rook whose lower mandible was slightly elongated and peculiarly sharpened, in contrast to a singularly short upper member. Like the preceding bird, it was shot in good plight, the malformation proving its downfall by attracting the attention of gunners.

I have twice met with gulls with the upper mandible rounding off to a right angle and passing the lower one, namely, an adult Common Gull in November 1891, and an immature Herring Gull in December 1900.

For a number of days a large Gull was observed

flying about the vicinity of Yarmouth with a long piece of string depending from its mandibles: to this most probably was attached a hook that had become fast in its gullet. The bird could always be distinguished by this means even when flying amongst a flock of its fellows.

It was a common sight, when gunning was more "profitably" pursued, owing to the greater number of birds frequenting Breydon, to see Dunlins or other small wading birds, minus one leg, hopping about on the remaining member, and as adroitly capturing sandhoppers and *Gammaridæ* as their unmutilated companions. And birds, too, with parts or pieces of mandibles broken off by gunshots were not infrequently shot, showing that, in spite of apparently disqualifying conditions, the unfortunate sufferers had outlived their mishaps, and were still game for gaining a livelihood.

On 4th October 1903 my attention was attracted by a bird several hundred yards away upon a flat. I turned my glasses upon it, and was for the moment inclined to imagine it a Glossy Ibis, of which species one had recently been shot. The "face" was black, giving the mandibles a singular appearance. Presently the bird opened its wings,

and at once I could see by the markings it was a Curlew; and by the odd way it hopped, I could see one leg was hopelessly shattered by a gunshot. The discoloration on the "face" was nothing else but mud that had besmeared it as, while probing for its prey, the bill was thrust still deeper into the mud by the poor bird's efforts to steady itself. The rapidity with which wounded limbs heal is remarkable; and it is equally astonishing how fractures and damages to limbs, that would entirely incapacitate human beings, do not very apparently inconvenience the bird, otherwise than in its pursuit of food. Surely pain must be felt in so highly organised a creature?

DEARLY LEARNT WIT

Birds are slow to change old habits or forsake old haunts, nor do they appear to be readily taught to profit by accidents. They lack, too, the faculty of observation, although usually very wary and ready to shun apparent dangers. Starlings are seldom caught napping, and after a few repeated onslaughts by a gunner will give him some trouble to get a tolerably good shot at them—in the open. Extreme

exhaustion, however, makes many birds stupidly tame—or indifferent—when their natural wariness becomes conspicuous by its absence.

In October 1890 a flock of Starlings alighted, tired and weary, in the rigging of a lightship, when one of the hands deftly brought down one by a shot from a pea-rifle. The birds closed up, as the ranks of a regiment might do at the falling of a comrade. Thus, one after the other, thirteen were rendered *hors de combat*, the survivors having meanwhile continuously closed up as one and another dropped out. Suddenly, however, those remaining became alarmed, and flew away.

The Ringed Plovers which from time immemorial have placed their nests on the north beach, have not profited by the very untoward circumstances of latter years; and to this day the remnant of the native race attempts to settle here in the spring.

As recently as the spring of 1902 two pairs of Lesser Terns (*Sterna minuta*) took a great fancy to the Breydon mud flats, and from what I observed of their actions, they were intent upon taking up nesting quarters on one of the highest flats, near the "Ship Drain," which is covered to-day only by the higher spring tides. They remained there well into

June, when a higher tide than usual washed them entirely off the flat. I saw them afterwards seemingly disconsolately feeding and hovering in the neighbourhood, having, apparently, become convinced that this was the end of the spring house-keeping, and that they had made a mess of it!

My attention was attracted one day in December 1890 by the strange rotary flight of a Rook: in a most agitated fashion it mounted spirally to some distance. I covered it with my glasses, and saw presently a crab fall from it into a heap of furze below, to the very apparent relief of the bird, which shook itself and most gladly made off inland. It had undoubtedly pounced down upon the stranded crab, thinking to make an easy meal of it, but had instead tackled a very lively tartar indeed. The crustacean, as far as I could see, had grasped the Rook by the neck in one of its pincer claws.

A large Gull and a Heron were seen engaged in a regular combat on Breydon mud flats; the latter, who had secured an eel weighing a pound and a half, bravely warded off its antagonist, which now and then plucked tufts of feathers out of it. A gunner drawing up unobserved, settled the dispute by shooting both birds. He secured the eel as well. The

Gull had a hole large enough for the insertion of a finger in its crop, made by a stab of the Heron's bill.

VERY ODD MEALS

Tired with the long, dreary flight across seas from his Norwegian home, a Jackdaw sought shelter and rest on board a lightship in the October of 1882. He was secured by one of the crew, and having had his wing clipped, was allowed the freedom of the deck. He soon became a most amusing member of the crew, the cook's galley being his favourite resort. One day, while the men were at prayers, "Jack" discovered a big plum-duff standing outside the cook-house door to cool, and immediately set to work picking out and devouring every raisin that could be seen sticking around it. The men apparently enjoyed the joke as much as the bird did the raisins.

Odd only, perhaps, from its disproportionate size, a full-grown Grey Plover was found entire in the crop of a Glaucous Gull shot in this locality. It was perhaps a wounded bird picked up on the seashore, or more probably a bird found floating dead on the sea. Such dead migrants often make a welcome meal to passing gulls.

Mention is made in the *Zoologist* of a Common Gull shot on the Yare, from whose mouth depended five tallow candles, the sixth having been almost entirely swallowed. The candles were of that sort used on board the fishing luggers some years ago—about ten inches in length, with cotton wicks. It was suggested that the bird had snatched up the candles from the deck of a vessel; but the probability is that they had been accidentally dropped overboard, and there discovered by the hungry creature.

This and other gulls are by no means dainty as to their diet, being indeed omnivorous, and apparently perfectly indifferent as to taste. I have seen the Common Gull in big squabbling flocks hanging around the sewer gratings at Dublin, pulling out refuse of the vilest description, fighting indeed for it. Night-lights, candle-ends, drowned mice, rats, kittens, and a hundred other forms of refuse floating up from the filthy waterside of a town, are all alike acceptable to the various species which congregate at the entrance of Breydon.

In the matter of eating, few birds trouble about the odd ingredients making their meals so long as a sufficiency is forthcoming. In June 1891, when rowing up the Bure, I was struck by the antics of a

couple of Starlings that were busily scrambling and fluttering up and down some boarded pilings, against which wherries moor to discharge cargoes of marl, gravel, and flints. By carefully getting into close proximity to the industrious birds, I could see that they were having a right royal time amongst the variously sized sea-slaters (*Ligia oceanica*) that were sunning themselves on the warm, dry timbers. Equally fond of armadillos (*Armadillidium vulgare*), locally known as "sows," and their kindred, it used to be a frequent thing to see the Starling grubbing about at the foot of gravestones, in the old churchyard, pulling the grass away, indeed, in order to get at them. I noticed this when a mere lad, as I myself always found these spots afforded very comfortable shelter from the sun and weather for snails and other vermin loved of my birds.

THE HOUSE-MARTIN

Of late years, from two obvious reasons, that delightful little bird, the House-Martin, has become exceedingly scarce within the town precincts. Time was when its constant flitting to and fro was one of the common sights in our hot, dusty streets, its merry

chatter as it flew overhead in fine weather or kept low in rain-time, its white rump conspicuously showing, calling attention to its passing. Its nests were known in several locations, particularly at a corner house, now demolished and replaced by a restaurant adjoining the Catholic Church; also at the bank in the market-place, and under the eaves of a tall house on Caister Road—at this latter place, to this day, one or two pairs still determinedly nest. And there were a number of other houses to be found dotted with an odd nest or two. In the early mornings, in my boyish days, I used to watch the House-Martins at the mud puddles in the middle of the Caister Road, pecking at the softened soil, and kneading and preparing the material for their nests.

But bad times came along. The Sparrows, increasing beyond reasonable bounds, became more impudent—if it were possible—in like proportion, and among other appropriation usurped many a little Martin's nest, waiting usually until the domicile was well towards completion, and then driving out the builders. Immediately the thieves set about dragging in what, to them, seemed the necessary furniture—hay, bits of straw, extra feathers, and the like. An eviction is usually published by a slovenly

out-hanging of fluttering, pendent rubbish. How the new and unexpected tenants find room as the young Sparrows grow is a mystery. Certain it is that the unprepared-for weight occasionally brings down the whole structure, and the Sparrows' house-keeping comes to an abrupt termination. It is not difficult to distinguish a Sparrow that has nested in a stolen home, for it has a stumpy tail, due, of course, to abrasion against the hard cabin walls.

The innovation, too, of watering the town roads with salt water has added a new menace in the shape of spoiling the Martins' mortar. In the first place, the mud is salt, which must be noticed by the sense of taste, although it has not deterred the Martins from trying it. Again, it is very susceptible to changes in the temperature, and while it may remain hard and compact during hot dry weather, its consistency and strength are so much impaired by a continuation of moisture, that it becomes easily detached from the supporting wall. And down comes "babies and cradle and all."

Consequently there has seemed a very apparent rush to the country—at least, so it appeared to me; and I have wandered some miles around looking for

nests—and not in vain. Martins are fortunately still fairly common in the villages. In taking a ramble in 1890 to Mautby, I came across a couple of cottages, in the gardens of which the Martins flitted about like so many bees around a hive. Under the eaves of one house no less than twelve nests were attached, and the other had a similar number. A certain corner of the first house had been chosen, and the nests were literally built in flats! Three nests were erected under the eaves at one end, and in the angles below them two others were affixed. The place around was sunny and sheltered, and just the locality for harbouring insect life. The Martins seemed to know and appreciate this, as did the inhabitants of the cottages, who were justly proud of the colony of birds, and righteously protected them.

At one time I took in hand to count the number of nests in Yarmouth—in the heyday of their abundance—and among other facts I ascertained that, although the birds apparently choose sites facing east and north, opposite points of the compass exhibited almost an equal number of nests.

VERY HUNGRY BIRDS

The winter of 1890-1 set in early, most severe weather obtaining as early as 26th November, when a heavy snowstorm ushered in a considerable spell of it. Snow-Buntings abounded on the Denes; Redwings on the 28th were busily hunting for berries on the snow-covered hawthorns; the Blackbirds and Thrushes, hard up for provender, visited backyards in the town itself; Sparrows burrowed into the stacks; Starlings gleaned by the margin of the river. On the same date I saw numerous Sanderlings on the beach—birds that only visit us in any numbers in severe weather. A great many ducks were in the roadstead. Larks, busy amongst the cabbages in town gardens, were reducing the leaves to a bare skeleton work of ribs. I saw a Hooded Crow chasing a Dunlin on Breydon—losing them both in the distance. Another was seen to single out a Dunlin from a flock, chase it down, and in a very few minutes had dismembered and eaten it. Gulls were seen to hunt down wounded Dunlins. It is notorious that when the Hooded Crow is hungry enough to follow the sportsman, he does not interfere with the dead birds, but invariably pursues the wounded.

A WILY BIRD-CATCHER

The following entry is copied *verbatim* from an entry dated 27th December 1890 :—

“A wild day. This morning was exceedingly wintry: wind east-north-east. The waste land now being converted into a new recreation ground (now building on), and which has been well sprinkled with town refuse, was swarmed by some 500 Black-headed Gulls. They were not only sharp-set, but had found something in the shape of putrid herrings that might be seen sticking out of the snow in a very tempting fashion. No sooner were they disturbed and driven away from one spot than they settled on another. A number of Starlings, sharing the spoil with the Gulls, were constantly harassed by small boys with stones and steelfalls, and older boys with guns.”

Not far off here, under the lee of the mill, a wily bird-catcher, nicknamed “Duchess” Cubitt, had spread a pair of clap-nets, made of herring-lint, each twelve yards in length by four in width. The ground had been brushed clear of snow and baited with herring refuse. His quest was gulls. He captured more than a hundred poor things, all of which, save fifteen that I procured from him alive,

were killed for the paltry fourpence each he got for them from a skin-dealer, who sent them away for millinery work.

The continuance of severe weather so hungered and tamed the poor creatures that they swarmed the river opposite the Town Hall, picking up food thrown into the water. They even flew up and down the Marine Parade, snatching up broken biscuits flung out to them by interested spectators.

Of course, many fell victims to the "sporting" tactics of cruel boys. On the 29th some were being trapped in steelfalls. A wash tub, and even a fish-trunk, were seen in use—standing on edge, supported by a stick which could be pulled away by a long string. Many were taken by these rough downfall contrivances. Some were even taken on the South Denes by lifting in a similar fashion the nets spread there. On 17th February 1902 one man captured forty-six Black-headed Gulls and two Common Gulls.

This same man, Cubitt by name, is a remarkably keen-witted fellow in the detecting of rare *Incessores*, and in their capture very "fortunate." His largest catch of Common Linnets in one day was 207 males, and almost an equal number of females: the latter



THE WILDFOWLS' TOILET

WIGEON, PINTAIL, GOLDEN-EYE, TEAL.

5455

he released as useless. In the "Lapland year" (1892) he secured in all no less than five dozen Lapland Buntings (*Calcarius lapponicus*). Of Larks he captured nearly 100 dozen one year, and as many as 40 dozen in one week. A Common Snipe, passing over his nets in company with several Starlings, was "pulled at" and secured.

One other interesting fellow is "Wire" Quinton, a gaunt Robinson Crusoe sort of a man, who, amongst other occupations, tacks on that of bird-catching. During the rush of Bramblings in 1895 he captured thirty at one pull of the net. During an invasion of Siskins in December 1901 he observed a number of these birds on an old lettuce-bed. Borrowing a decoy bird, he laid his nets early next morning, and by breakfast-time had netted 90, and by eleven o'clock no less than 140. That rare or interesting bird which catches Quinton's eye almost surely, sooner or later, is inveigled into his nets—be it Blackcap, Flycatcher, Shore-Lark, or Serin Finch.

WATCHING WILD DUCKS

This title may be slightly misleading, for the remarks that follow deal simply with the local

habits of a certain few species. It would be difficult enough to attempt anything dealing with the general habits of these *Palmipedes*, for whole volumes have been devoted to describing the life-history of our British ducks.

To my mind the most interesting of the local ducks is the Common Scoter, whose presence here off-shore corresponds only with the advent and continuation of the severest weather.

The Wigeon is without doubt the most abundant local species; dropping in in varying numbers every March, it is sometimes exceedingly numerous. Flocks of from 500 to 1000 are not uncommon occasionally on Breydon, where the "widgeon grass" (*Zostera marina*), which flourishes on the mud flats, affords an excellent supply of food. The birds most industriously drag it out of the muds, for the sake of the white succulent stalks, which are nibbled off and devoured; the slender leaves, left to float upon the surface, drift down on the ebb in great green patches. The Wigeon may be seen in the daytime napping, and preening their feathers, occasionally varying these exercises by that of feeding; and they may be heard babbling in the dark, still busily pulling up the grass for their evening meal, an

incessant cry of "*Sme-u, Sme-u!*" testifying to the satisfaction a goodly supply of provender affords them. The local gunners in the old days welcomed these merry gatherings of "Smee," as they named them from their cry. To-day they congregate in peace.

On 20th April 1900, at very low water, when the windings of the "Ship Drain" were mostly hidden by the edges of the flats, I twice unexpectedly sailed through a large flock, mostly males. They rose as I dashed round a bend into their midst, and again as I doubled another, beyond which they had settled very shortly after my first intrusion. On 16th March 1889 I estimated the number of Wigeon on Breydon at something like 5000 birds.

The Teal is becoming yearly scarcer. Golden-eyes (*Clangula glaucion*) are common in "hard" weather; and with the Tufted Duck (*Fuligula cristata*) and the Scaup (*F. marila*) are known as "hard-weather fowl." The Pochard, nicknamed the "Poker," is far less abundant than formerly on Breydon, although in protracted winters I have known "crowds" to be seen in the open places on the frozen Broads. In the severe weather of December 1890 some Pochards brought to Durrant's stall were so hard-

frozen, although freshly killed, that I balanced one on my hand on the tip of its bill, the tail and feet remaining straight up and immovable. An old gunner described the ducks—"the old hard-weather" —as flocking around the neighbourhood by "waggon-loads."

To hear the worn-out gunners discourse upon the weather and the wildfowl of the old days, one might suppose that of late winters have deteriorated in the matter of frost and snow, instead of occasional winters being severe as ever, with others open and mild between. It is natural they should, with that privilege allowed to increasing age, go on from imagining to believing that the old was altogether so different from the new. Still, wild ducks in ordinary seasons are scarcer; and there may be even something in the statement that since the decoys fell into disuse, wildfowl have fallen off in numbers — the feeding, the privacy, and other circumstances having also become matters of the past.

"In the old days," said a gunner to me, "the ice formed on Breydon four or five inches thick in as many days." This was when even at low water the majority of the flats still remained submerged—

and by keeping a wake open near his houseboat, he used to have the fowl "drop in, right past the punt gun." He and others, although prices were low, used to earn £3 and £4 a week in hard weather.

We get more wild ducks in Norfolk waters when the Baltic becomes frozen over; when it is otherwise, shipmasters tell us, parts of that sea are "black with birds."

On being asked what was the greatest shot he ever made, an ancient Breydoner drily remarked that he once "laid" at quite a thousand "Smee" and other ducks, and pulled the trigger, when—the gun missed fire!

In the 'fifties there followed the profession of wild-fowler a man who was, in his day, a mighty hunter. He was also a deep drinker, and not infrequently, after becoming stupidly intoxicated, would tumble into his punt, mechanically paddle upstream, and after making fast his craft to an oar stuck in the mud, fall asleep, to wake up sober in the morning. On one occasion he awoke to find himself smothered with snow, with ice formed around him, save in a "wake" in the "drain" a bit ahead of him. As he rubbed his eyes into wakefulness he heard the

babble of wild ducks that had gathered around him, unconscious of an enemy being so near. This sight effectually sobered him, and cautiously firing into them, he made a good bag. Profiting by his environment, and the eagerness of parties of birds to use the open water, he kept the game going, and at length found upon the ice on either side of him two small heaps of slain. This old man was subsequently drowned on Breydon after a drunken spree.

It is an exceptionally rare circumstance to see a duck of any species, unless slightly wounded, on the beach. I have seen, however, pretty plain evidence that some of the diving ducks do take a quiet sit down on the beach at night; but they are so exceedingly wary that one can never actually find them there, the slightest footfall being enough to startle them; and only a few footprints, or some droppings here and there, remain to mark the spot.

Strong northerly winds are responsible for the rather rare appearance of the Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), and it is a fortunate one indeed that ever returns, for its tameness is taken advantage of by the merest urchin who can throw a stone with the slightest skill. On December 1883 one was

killed in this manner on Breydon by some mischievous boys, and another in the wash of the sea off Hemsby in November 1897. The Shoveler is undoubtedly becoming more abundant. As many as sixty-five were observed in a flock on Breydon on 5th March 1890.

A few pairs of Sheld-ducks still nest on the north-west coast of Norfolk, and small casual flocks visit Breydon. The greatest quantity I ever saw was during a thick rime frost in 1879, when an unusual number passed along the beach southwards, almost within arm's length. There really seemed to be hundreds! A flock of seventeen were seen on Breydon in January 1897, the greater portion being killed in the course of two or three days. The Sheld-duck has much of the Goose in its habits, and keeps a great deal out of the water, patrolling all over the flats, gleaning small mollusca and the young of the common winkle.

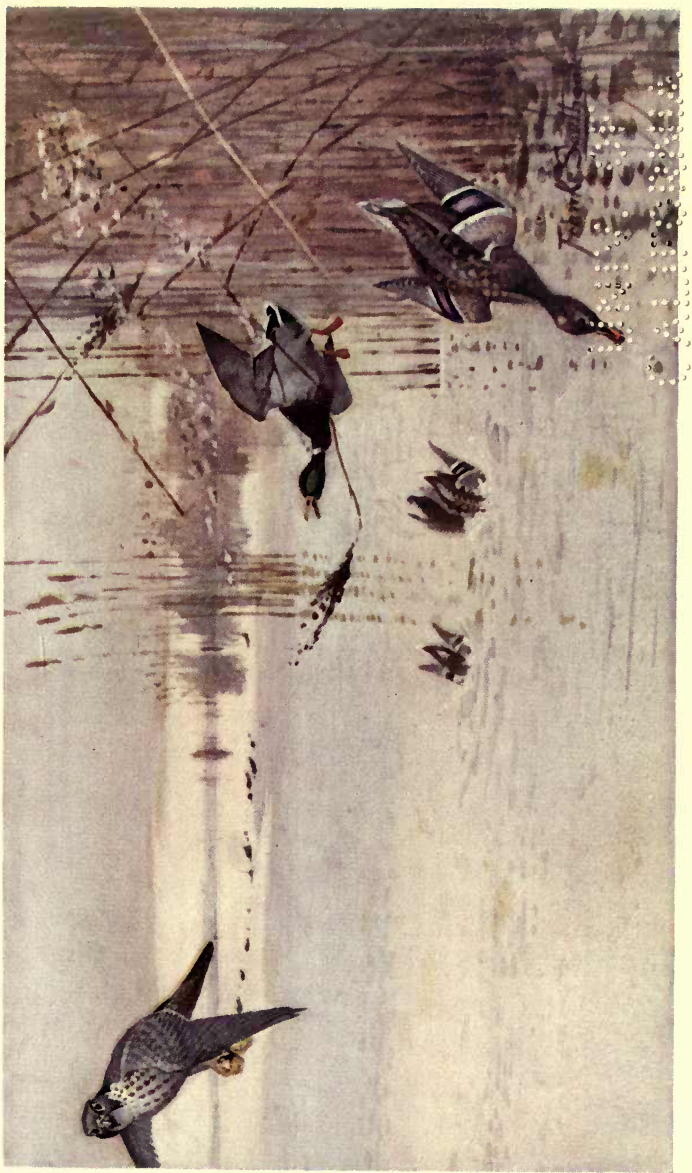
THE PEREGRINE FALCON

This, the noblest of our British Falconidæ, although always comparatively rare in this neighbourhood, is now one of our rarest autumnal visitors. A

chance one occasionally drops in and makes his presence felt in the surrounding villages, and complaints are heard from one and another marshman that his ducks have suffered, or some pigeon fancier has a complaint to make. All its movements are characterised by a courage and dash that at least command the notice if not the admiration of those who meet with it. The Broadmen term it "the game hawk"; and some could tell of its boldness in chasing its quarry under the very noses of the angry owners. Lubbock¹ mentions the fact of a Peregrine striking at Coots disturbed by an approaching boat, killing two within a very short distance from the startled rower.

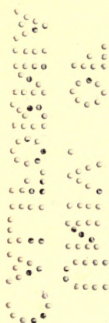
A few years ago, when some sportsmen, unarmed at that moment, were gossiping on the Bure walls near the Market Gardens (now built upon), they observed some ducks passing over seawards from Breydon. Suddenly out from a tree dashed a Peregrine, and singling out a Wigeon, it struck the bird, which fell just over the hedge. Through the hedge one of the men scrambled, and appropriated the fowl ere the disappointed Falcon could claim it for his own.

¹ *Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk.*



THE STRICKEN MALLARD

PEREGRINE FALCON AND WILD DUCK



On one occasion an old and noted punt gunner known as "Silky" Watson was sculling up in a "wake" in the ice, with intent to try a shot at a parcel of ducks asleep on the top of the ice on the edge of a flat. The gunner was, however, to be baffled, for at a most ticklish moment a Peregrine made a dash at the fowl. With precipitate haste they dived into the drain, rising at some distance ahead, and so escaping. My informant would have repeated the "broad Norfolk" made use of by the disappointed Watson, but well knowing what a vocabulary the old school of Breydoners had at their command, even on ordinary occasions, I preferred to imagine it instead.

Some years ago, during an exceptionally hard winter, Breydon was pretty well covered with ice, except where here and there a "creek" kept open a wake. In one of these openings several gunners were on the lookout for a shot at the fowl, which in numbers flew around overhead, anxious to feel the water beneath them. Presently a Peregrine loomed up and drove the fowl hither and thither. Suddenly from a great height he was seen to descend, and in a moment struck a fowl with such force that it was killed outright, falling from under

him. To the surprise of the interested gunners, the stricken duck fell with a thud upon the bottom boards of one of the punts. An exceptional circumstance this indeed, where a gunner has his game so neatly killed and retrieved without any effort on his part.

BIRDS ON A GAME STALL

The late W. Durrant's game stall in Yarmouth Market has for years been a resort of wildfowlers, sportsmen, and men not wishing to be recognised or known as either, but whose tastes brought them into contact with various creatures, the snaring or shooting of which provides sport without much fear of trouble at the hands of the rural policemen. The stall has for many years been a most reliable gauge of the numbers and species of birds frequenting the locality at different seasons of the year. It had been my practice to watch this "institution" carefully, for there was usually something interesting to be seen, rarely a "good" bird to be discovered, and frequently a great display of victims during the prevalence of severe or stormy weather. Swans, wild geese, ducks, shore-birds, land-birds were all mixed up together in riotous confusion, and at times

the boards literally creaked under their weight. A few lists made at sundry times may prove of interest.

8th December 1890

Tufted Ducks	several
Dabchicks	3
Golden-eye Ducks	5
Bewick's Swans (mature)	2
„ „ (immature)	1
Short-horned Owls	2
Red-throated Diver	1
Duck and Mallard	several
White-fronted Goose	1
Water Hens and Coots	several
Snipe	several
Pochard and Wigeon	several
Kestrel	1
Goosander	1
Curlews	2
Water Rails	12
Barn Owls	3
Numerous small birds, Thrushes, etc.	

29th November 1890

240 Dunlins.
 47 Duck and Mallard.
 110 Full Snipe.
 9 Knots.
 2 Swans (Bewick).
 14 Plovers (various).
 11 Woodcocks.

14 Jack Snipe.
 3 Curlews.
 39 Larks.
 52 Thrushes and Blackbirds,
 etc., also Golden - eyes, a
 Pintail, a Bittern, and a
 Godwit.

During a few days' severe frost in the first half of December 1899, Durrant had something like 650 Common Snipe on his stall. On the 16th the figures of birds, as culled from his notebook, are sufficiently interesting to subjoin; and these, with those previously mentioned, may be taken as fair samples of many displays exhibited there during the number of years business was carried on by him.

16th December 1899

336 Dunlins.	1 Goosander.
20 Coots.	80 Blackbirds.
6 Dabchicks.	1 Curlew.
12 Water Rails.	32 Duck and Mallard.
3 Golden Plovers.	90 Half fowl (being about
1 Heron.	equally divided between
30 Larks.	Tufted Ducks, Wigeon,
310 Snipe.	and Pochards).
10 Moorhens.	3 Teal.
26 Lapwings.	3 Golden-eyes.

RAIN-BEATEN SWIFTS

On the afternoon of 19th July 1891 I witnessed a huge procession of Swifts—by far the largest flock of this species I ever saw. They were flying from north-east to south-west against a deluge of rain

(with thunder) working in an opposite direction: the sky being lighted up below the storm-cloud; for this brighter spot they were evidently heading. They appeared lumps of bedraggled feathers, and scarcely able to ply their wings. At the rate of 60 or 70 per minute, I computed some 2000 birds must have passed in half an hour.

A very similar incident occurred on Ormesby Broad the August previous, when I and a friend were fishing. A terrific thunderstorm, and probably the heaviest downpour of rain I was ever caught in, had, as it were, drawn into its midst a confused cloud of Swifts, Swallows, and Martins; these were struggling towards the horizon, where there was an apparent break in the leaden skies. Whether they ever reached it I am unable to say. It is probable that in such unexpected storms many of these delicate birds perish. Their soaked plumage at anyrate reduces them to sore straits.

On one occasion I saw a gunner bring down a Swift. Opening its mouth, I saw in its gullet a mass—quite a teaspoonful—of a species of small dipterous insect. The favourite item in its bill of fare is the St. Mark's Fly (*Bibio marci*).

On 13th May the arrival of the first Swifts is

looked for, and the last of them in about the third or last week in August. The last of 1903 was observed on 5th September. The latest record I have of one seen was on 25th September 1892. In August 1881 a spell of cold rains decimated the ranks of the Swifts, which dropped into the streets, or flew, bedraggled and dying, into most unusual places. The wet cold summer of 1903 killed off the first brood, in most cases the chicks in the eggs perishing. In one local resort the owner of the house informed me that the old birds turned out the eggs, which he found broken, with the unhatched young, on his doorstep.

UNSOCIABLE BIRDS

Some birds are exceedingly sociable in their habits, and delight, under various circumstances, not only to congregate in flocks of their own species, but to join in with those of others—the Starling and the Knot are particular instances. On the other hand, certain birds do not court the society of their fellows, much less that of other species. They may not necessarily be rare, they are solitary rather, and unsociable. The Purple Sandpiper (*Tringa striata*) is an example. Its appearance is usually looked for in October, upon

the beach (very seldom indeed is it seen on Breydon), and then only odd birds are found, industriously running along by the sea-margin, utterly indifferent to the company of any other avine rambler. It is a rare circumstance on our beach to find two together. The Green Sandpiper (*Totanus ochropus*) and the Phalaropes are also usually met with singly.

STALKING A SPOONBILL

The Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) almost invariably visits us in spring-time, seldom in winter. And whereas, prior to the innovation of the Protection Acts, its appearance on Breydon meant an immediate opening of hostilities, to-day, thanks to the presence of a watcher, so long as it remains in the vicinity of the mud flats its safety is almost guaranteed. Unfortunately, odd birds will occasionally straggle to the marshes, and there, once marked down, a persistent visitation is almost certain to end in disaster. Such an ending overtook a Spoonbill on Burgh Marshes as recently as the spring of 1902. In the Pagets'¹ "List," the Spoonbill

¹ *Sketch of the Natural History of Great Yarmouth*, by C. J. and J. Paget, 1834.

is thus remarked upon: "A flock in the marshes in 1774, several killed in 1808, and two or three are generally shot every spring, on Breydon."

The stalking of wildfowl was never greatly in vogue—at least in recent years. In the early half of the nineteenth century an occasional Goose was approached by stalking it behind a borrowed horse or ass upon the "allotments," but only in an extempore and casual sort of way.

On 16th September 1890 a Spoonbill visited Breydon. On the 19th it was killed on the marshes by a gunner who, securing a horse by means of a halter, attempted, and with success, the old ruse of walking round in gradually lessening circles, hidden behind the animal. Before the bird had taken the alarm, he managed to get within easy distance, killing it at the first shot.

SIBERIAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER

On the afternoon of 21st August 1892 I took a stroll along the North Breydon walls. When near the Triangle Pond, about half a mile up the estuary, I espied a very nimble, pert sort of a wader erratically hunting along the margin. At a glance I was

satisfied it was a stranger, and my glasses made it out to be an unusual Sandpiper. I laid flat on the grass and could distinctly see its quest was the fresh-water shrimp, which swarmed in great numbers all round the shallow edge of the pond. While trying to make out the identity of the bird, I was twice disturbed by a pony stallion that had been turned out on the marsh, its persistent capering and prancing around me making it necessary for me, to save myself probably from a kick, to chase the brute away. This performance naturally put the bird to flight; but, to my surprise, it flew out over Breydon, in a half-mile circle, and actually came back and settled in the same spot again. I had a capital view of it, and on reference to Saunders' *Manual*, decided it to be a Pectoral Sandpiper. The bird, unfortunately, being shot shortly after, confirmed my finding, for it was identified as *Tringa acuminata*, the Siberian Pectoral Sandpiper.

IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

Under ordinary conditions, there are certain species of birds visiting this locality year by year, in greater or lesser numbers. We look for their

appearance as regularly as the season comes round. These include flocks of Larks, Rooks, Hooded Crows, Siskins, Gold-crested Wrens, Woodcocks, and some others. Other species are erratic in their visits, years intervening sometimes between a noticeable immigration and a reoccurrence of the species; they then probably surprise us by their numbers. The summer "invasion" of the Pallas's Sand-Grouse in 1863 and the spring irruption of 1888 are cases in point. The Lapland Bunting was formerly looked upon as a rare visitant to Norfolk; so much so, that Stevenson's remarks upon it¹ are worth repetition: "On the 26th of January 1855, during extremely severe weather, a specimen of this very rare Bunting was taken alive at Postwick, near Norwich. This bird, probably the first ever known to have occurred in this county, was brought to me soon after its capture, and proved to be a young male in winter plumage." Some remarks upon its characteristics in confinement follow, and Stevenson continues: "The only other Norfolk specimen of this Bunting I have either seen or heard of, was shown me on the 14th of April 1862."

In October and November 1892 a considerable

¹ Stevenson's *Birds of Norfolk*, vol. i. p. 181.

number were seen, trapped, and shot, more than fifty being secured by net and gun. It happened that a bird-catcher who was "set" for Snow-Buntings secured an example, and being curious at the peculiarity of its markings, made inquiries, with the result that it was identified. It was discovered that the Lapland Bunting was quite a boon companion of the commoner species, consorting with it in some numbers, and the rare birds, hitherto supposed to be badly marked females or young, had met with scant notice. One wily bird-catcher after this identification made it a practice to seek for the species, and having distinguished a difference in its call-note, took particular pains to ensnare every bird possible, until it became accounted absolutely common, and its marketable value came down to between one shilling and two shillings apiece.

A similar history attaches to the Shore-Lark, which, prior to 1876, was considered a great variety. An educated sportsman shooting into a flock of Snow-Buntings, with which the species consorts from choice, discovered, and afterwards confirmed his convictions, that it was almost a yearly visitant, sometimes arriving in considerable numbers, as in October 1880, and again in the winter of 1882, when sixty,

mostly males, were obtained. Stevenson says, "The first recorded specimen of the Shore-Lark in Norfolk, and probably the first ever recognised in England, is the one (thus) referred to" (quoting Yarrell). This specimen was obtained at Sherringham in March 1830. Several were obtained before the publication of *The Birds of Norfolk*; these Stevenson takes pains to enumerate and attach dates, considering the occurrences sufficiently rare to warrant this.

An arrival of Mealy Redpolls in November 1893 was a marked feature of that year, when scores were netted. The Brambling occurred in large flocks in the winter of 1885, and again in that of 1894-95, when many dozens were trapped. A bird-catcher, who discovered the bird's partiality for certain districts, cleared the ground of snow, and daily baited it with various seeds. So many poor little things were taken that they were sold alive at a penny and twopence apiece in the open market. Unusual quantities of Siskins arrived in the winter of 1900. A bird-catcher, observing a number frequenting an old lettuce-bed, borrowed a tame Siskin for a decoy bird, and laid his nets early in the morning. By breakfast time he had netted 90,

and by eleven o'clock he had secured 140, which he assures me he sold at one shilling each male, and twopence each female.

FLIGHTS OF WOOD-PIGEONS

A marked increase in the numbers of the Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) has taken place in Norfolk, attributable, Stevenson says, "in a great degree to the extension of our fir plantations, added to their immunity at the present time from the attacks of their natural enemies, crows, magpies, and hawks, now almost exterminated as residents amongst us, through the strict preservation of game." Numbers build in the neighbouring country. The *coo* of the Ringdove is perhaps the most familiar sound to be heard in the wooded surroundings of the Broadlands, and the noisy flip-flap of its wings is frequently heard as one moves along by the country roadside. At all periods of the year, even when the close season has made the market bare of wildfowl, Wood-Pigeons are common objects of the countrymen's stall. There can be no doubt that our home-bred birds roam widely in search of food; whilst arrivals from the north of Europe add largely to

their number in the fall of the year. Two enormous flocks of this species passed over Yarmouth on 22nd and 23rd December 1893. There were thousands. I considered at the time that they were fleeing from severe weather in their native haunts, and made a note of it, suggesting that it would most likely follow in their wake. As a matter of fact, in a very short time heavy winds and snowstorms visited us. The birds settled in the vicinity, and the Saturday's market was glutted with them. Thousands again arrived on 12th December 1898, and passing straight on over the town, made inland. I visited the Saturday's market, expecting to find our rural sportsmen had been busy; but none were on sale, so that they must have gone, being probably unwearied, a considerable distance inland.

UNEXPECTED PLEASURE

The ornithologist has his delights, and one of them is to break in, as it were, upon a scene that delights his eyes, such as, for instance, when I myself, paddling upstream on 15th May 1893, on the top of the flood-tide, saw upon the "lumps" still uncovered by water a congregation of no

less than eighteen Black Terns, more than fifty Turnstones, several Common and Arctic Terns, a number of Dunlins, Grey Plovers, Whimbrel, and Godwits, and, not least worthy of a glance, three Spoonbills. These birds had gathered during the night on the flats to feed, breaking their journey northwards; and as the tide gradually drove them from the lower portions, they made for the highest remaining muds, to take a rest before still pursuing their flight, or to wait for the falling water to again lay bare their feeding-grounds.

On the evening of 8th May 1895 I put out again for a cruise among the mud flats, when I came across quite a menagerie of birds. There were some 34 Black Terns, 14 Turnstones, 1 Spoonbill (two days before 12 had departed from Breydon), and 77 Godwits (bar-tailed) altogether on the "lumps," besides a fair sprinkling of Grey Plovers and Whimbrel, and a considerable number of Black-headed Gulls. On being disturbed, the Terns rose up screaming, and mounting high in the air, made away in a north-east direction. On the next evening I counted 100 Godwits in one flock.

When taking a stroll along Breydon walls on 15th August 1898 I observed a flat crowded with

birds. It was a very warm, still evening. Lying hidden in the tall grass that covered the walls, I watched them with interest for some time through my glasses, and with a little patience made an estimate of their number. There were as follow :—

24 Herons, over	8 Common Sandpipers,
200 Curlews ; and nearly	1 Green Sandpiper, and
2000 Gulls (mostly asleep).	1 Greenshank.

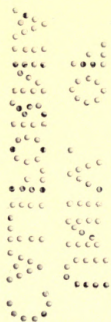
After a spell of wind in October 1900, a number of gulls trooped in to Breydon for a much-needed rest. When sailing by the flats I passed several hundreds, mostly Greater Saddlebacks and Herring Gulls.

Who shall not say the unexpected sight of a flock of Spoonbills, from six even up to a dozen, flying by in single file, or feeding in regular order, is anything but a pleasurable one ?

On 14th January 1899 I took a ramble in the same vicinity. Observing an unusually light-coloured gull preening its feathers, and apparently listlessly pottering about on the mud, close under the stone wall, I crept along until within distance of it, and cautiously looked over. It goes without saying that the sight of an Iceland Gull making itself quite at home on the mud flats was as pleasant



EVENING ON BREYDON



as it was unusual. Within two hours after a local wildfowler had seen and slain it. Whether his pleasure in knocking it over exceeded mine in watching the bird enjoying life and liberty, is open to question.

When sailing across Breydon on 5th April 1900 I passed three grandly plumaged Herons fast asleep at the entrance of a drain. The flats everywhere were dotted with Dunlins. I saw a number of Knots and Curlew-Sandpipers; Gulls and Curlews were napping together, and three Swans were feeding at the edge of a "run." A Peregrine Falcon stooped at half a dozen ducks, but did not strike, being baffled by a flock of noisy gulls, who mobbed him.

When shooting on the marshes in the neighbourhood of Ludham, on 11th November 1903, a friend of mine came unexpectedly upon a flock of half a score Short-eared Owls, which scattered at his approach. For the moment he did not identify the species, so brought down a couple, another gun doing the same. He was vexed directly after to recognise them as these most useful birds. They had probably but recently arrived from Scandinavia. On examining the ground, he discovered a number of

ejected pellets of remains of field mice. The flooding of the marshes had been disastrous to many field mice, that had been driven to such small patches of raised turf as remained above the swamp; here they were falling an easy prey to the rapacious birds. My friend repeated that the way they "shot up," and in broad daylight, simply surprised him. I saw three of the slain, finding them a male and two females.

HARD WEATHER AND WILD BIRDS

There is always an interest attached to the perusal of a diary recording the doings and happenings of years gone by, more especially if it is penned by one's own hand. This thought occurred to me in perusing my notebook for 1894. The following terse notes chronicle my observations of the first few days of that year:—

Weather and Birds.—January 1st came in rough and cold. To-day (2nd) snowing and blowing. Wind east to north-east. Sheld-ducks numerous in roadstead. Dunlins in units along beach in morning. Fieldfares plentiful around town to-day. Shot several for eating purposes. (Considered fine for dumplings.) Lapwings "hard up." Shot a full Snipe at dusk only three yards off with my old

converted muzzle rifle. Force of wind and flight made it fall at my feet. To-night's a regular ruffian!

Jan. 4.—Weather thickening and growing colder. Frost intense. Broads freezing over. Wildfowl becoming numerous in roads. Dunlins on beach. Snipe going southward.

Jan. 5.—Saw more ducks to-day than ever before in one day in my life. Hundreds upon hundreds. Gulls leading northwards. Ducks working southwards. Some Mergansers, many Scaups, Wigeon, even (crested) Grebes plentiful, and all manner of birds. Hundreds of Stints (Dunlins) going south.

Jan. 7.—Breydon (salt-water estuary) frozen over. Hooded Crows, sharp set, prowling around capturing wounded shore-birds. Coots flocking to salt water. A Coot was shot on North River, but falling into a "wake" in the ice, was not retrieved. Some Hooded Crows hauled it out on the ice and tore it to pieces. Small patches of blood and odd feathers, on the Breydon ice, pointed to avine tragedies—of shore-birds dead, wounded, or harried-down victims that had been devoured by Crows. Sanderlings on foreshore. Numbers of Dabchicks wherever open water: several shot. Coots croaking at night on Breydon in severe rime frost.

[Later on in the month a break in the weather occurred, and the birds scattered, returning to their old haunts.]

A friend of mine, recently deceased, was an ardent amateur punt gunner. The severest weather found

him on Breydon looking for a fowl or two. A favourite reminiscence of his was of a poor little Kingfisher, hard up for a dinner, that came and alighted on the end of his punt gun, and from it, as a perch, fished for nearly a couple of hours in the open water of the drain in which he lay moored. Through the intensity of the frost, the metal was so cold that he hesitated to lay his fingers upon it.

This same friend, just before his fatal illness, even when in failing health, made spasmodic visits to his favourite Breydon. One evening in November 1901 I found a leaf from a notebook slipped through my letter box. I give it as written, to show how fascinating even to a dying man remains the love of natural observation :—

“MR. PATTERSON,

“DEAR SIR,—16th November. Seen leading Breydon about 11.30 a.m. First 3 Swans, and then 34 or 35, and another lot of 24; also 1 goose. The latter was killed. Hundreds of Golden Plover and Lapwings, all leading north-west.—Yours truly,

“H. B.”

My own entries for that day are as follow :—

Swans and Geese.—Went for a jolly afternoon

on Breydon. Wind north-north-east; fine, but huge red clouds, like mountains, made the sky wild. Saw three Swans. I fancy they were Whoopers. Their note was a bad imitation of a Curlew's! Also saw forty-five Geese (probably Bean Geese) in one flock flying above and around. A few Lapwings; one Goosander.

THE COMMON SANDPIPER

No bird makes itself more conspicuous upon our Norfolk waterways in the finer portion of the year than this shrill-voiced, noisy, restless little wader. In spring and autumn small parties, sometimes of as many as eight individuals, may be seen busily, and with restless activity, picking up the small crustaceans—young ditch prawns (*Palæmon varians*) that have passed into the river through the sluices that drain the marshes, and opossum shrimps, that skirr and frolic at the margin of the stream. As soon as a yacht or wherry comes within the limit they consider safe for them, up they get with ear-piercing pipings, and hurry on ahead, to settle and feed until again disturbed. For a mile or two will they hurry along in this way, scarce ever thinking to double back, and so remain at peace. I had long suspected this bird of nesting in the neighbour-

hood of the Broads, having noticed it with us all summer through. A strict watch had been kept, until at length a nest was discovered under a bush at Hickling on 25th May 1897. Breydon walls are a favourite resort of this species in the autumn.

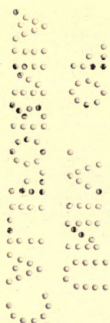
SOME WOODCOCK NOTES

Of late years there has been a decided falling-off in the numbers of Woodcocks visiting us. Every gunner, in my younger time, had an ambition to boast of at least one Woodcock slain; and he who exceeded that number was not slow to draw out a certain feather—one of the under-wing coverts—and stick it in the band of his hat. In some instances quite a row of these badges of prowess adorned the headgear of certain vain sportsmen. The habits of the Woodcock, although a secretive sort of a fellow, are too well known to need any comment thereon; but I have from time to time kept a record of its—to me—earliest known arrival in the autumn, and sundry incidents that have made its appearance somewhat remarkable:—

1881.—The first notified this year was on 9th September, a small dark variety which I thought



THE ARRIVAL OF THE WOODCOCK



probably a British-bred example. On 20th October one cut itself almost in halves by striking a telegraph wire in the night.

1883.—On 6th October I have a note referring to one obtained a fortnight before that date.

1889.—On 6th October of this year I have the following entry: "It looked rather odd to see a Woodcock just arrived, hanging upon a poulterer's stall with some Wigeon, while Swallows were still on the wing overhead."

1890.—Several seen, and some shot on 20th October, the previous night's arrivals. There had been a gale on the 18th. No less than eighteen hanging on a stall on the 21st. On the same date a fagged-out individual alighted on the rail of the pier and attempted to rest awhile; another dropped on the sands a week after. In a note for the 29th I have a record of several having been picked up exhausted, mostly on the sandhills.

1891.—Another example picked up in a railway cutting with breastbone cut in two.

1892.—First one noted 11th October. A note for the 8th records, "Flocks of House-Martins flying continuously in a southerly direction."

1893.—One seen on the 8th October; and one

killed on the 18th had a bill measuring only $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length.

1894.—First Woodcock killed on 3rd October, one killed by a stone on the 15th.

1895.—First seen 15th October.

The greatest number of Woodcocks I have ever heard of as being locally killed by one man after a heavy immigration is nine, all obtained in one day on the marams by a gunner named Davy Burch. This was early in the 'fifties.

Other first appearances are as follow:—

1896, 13th October; 1897, 5th October; 1898, 21st October, when a completely decapitated example was found lying beneath a telegraph wire; 1903, 24th October.

FOLLOWING THEIR FOOD

Many instances have been given of the wonderful way in which birds find out where food is in plenty. Whether they can communicate facts and ideas, or whether they trust to instinctive senses, I will not venture to suggest. I simply state facts.

I have noticed year by year how in the early mornings troops of Sparrows in summer betake themselves to the sands, to glean up crumbs and other

edibles left the day before by the visitors. In the autumn, too, they repair to the Denes in search of various spiders and coleoptera that are peculiar to such situations, patrolling the ground in regular business-like fashion. When grey mullet were plentiful in Breydon in spring, in the first half of the last century, Cormorants were commonly seen on the hunt for them. "Every post used to hold one," said an old Breydoner to me on one occasion.

A farmer at Caister, in December 1895, spread his fields with herring refuse. The gulls—Black-headed Gulls in particular—scented it out, and out of a ton or two of it spread over the soil, devoured probably a fourth of it before he had time to plough it in.

In the summer, almost as soon as a ditch has been "fyed-out," and the black mud has been thrown on either side, the Green Sandpiper (*Totanus ochropus*) puts in an appearance and begins a search for worms and larvæ upon it. I observed three of this locally lessening species at Mautby on 19th August 1895.

On 2nd February 1895 the land-birds had an exceedingly hard time. The Starlings were so tamed by hunger that they grubbed among the snow under the very eyes of the boys. Some bunches of them in the town prowled around and among the feet of the

horses. The Thrush family, whose various members had been careless and wasteful over the hawthorn berries (which at that time were "familiar objects" at the North End Gardens), and had strewn more than they ate on the ground and in the ditches below, were disconsolately searching for such as still remained; while they attacked the wreaths on the cemetery graves, in order to satisfy their hunger with the berries they found upon them. A wretched Thrush, grumpily hopping along under a bank, was seized by a hungry rat, pulled screaming into its burrow, and without a shadow of a doubt was speedily devoured.

Two young Herons, very tame and not yet strong on the wing, had fallen in with a pool full of sticklebacks on 29th July 1895. Here they were snapping them up to their heart's content.

A large dragon-fly on a fine sunny day in May 1897 came gaily winging its way along the Bridge Road. A Sparrow from a roof-gutter saw it, and gave chase. I never saw such doubling and cross flying by chace and quarry. For some minutes the chase lasted, the insect dodging the bird so deftly that one could almost imagine it enjoyed being pursued. Eventually both turned the corner of a building, and I lost sight of them.

There was, after continuous heavy rains, a great deal of water on the marshes in December 1901. A great many drowned worms laid at the margin and in the shallows. Golden Plovers and Lapwings became very numerous in the neighbourhood, drawn there by the plentiful supply of food. I am convinced that if individuals are incapable of conveying news—information, in fact—to their relatives, there must be many flights of birds passing and repassing in the dark hours, and that they are gifted with some instinct unknown to us, that directs their flight to places where food is in plenty. Whether seen to come or not, they do come, as I have in more than one instance pointed out. A sacred writer long ago declared that “where the carcass is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” At the period above referred to, I noted the dropping in of Fieldfares to share at the waterside the plentiful feast so unexpectedly provided. They mixed freely with the waders.

STRANGE COMPANIONSHIPS

One of my earliest recollections is of a queer case of companionship between a Lapwing and a Brahma hen. The “pewit” had been wing-tipped and turned

into a large garden, where in a very short time it became quite master of the situation, and was a source of annoyance to the old cock, who could not get a peck in anyhow, while the pert bird dodged between his legs and around him, as if for the very fun of it. The hen was quite a passive sort of "pal" to the Lapwing, who preferred its society, whether welcome or not, and usually spent its odd times, when not engaged in examining all the likely places for worms and vermin, in preening its feathers beside her.

I had at one time a tame Spoonbill, that con-sorted with a quartet of large gulls in a netted area some quarter-mile in circumference, although at meal-times the gulls more often than not devoured the sliced horse-beef thrown to them, while the stupid wader was endeavouring to swallow a piece much too big for the capacity of its small gullet. The Spoonbills that visit Breydon so frequently in spring and early summer invariably spend much of their sleeping-time in the midst of a flock of gulls, and also show a decided preference for feeding in their society.

A lady of my acquaintance was sitting on the beach one afternoon in September 1898 with a bunch of

grapes on her lap, which she was eating. A Sparrow most audaciously flew upon her knee and seized a grape with all the temerity of an old acquaintance. It goes without saying it was not denied one.

During my August holidays in 1903 I spent most of my time in my houseboat, moored in a "drain" in the centre of Breydon. During the whole of that period, whenever the water fell, or had not on the flood-tide reached the surface of the flats, a second-year Black-headed Gull persisted in keeping company with me; pieces thrown out from the table were gladly appropriated, and added variety to the marine titbits gleaned up on the flat. Nor did it choose to take fright at any demonstration I might make. I never before met with an instance where a Gull forced its company upon man's society, although, when moored on Heigham Sounds in 1895, a wild duck hung around for the sake of what I chose to throw out.

At the corner of the North Drain on Breydon a Turnstone was busily engaged (on 21st August 1900) turning over refuse and tangled bits of *Zostera marina* in search of Sandhoppers. A small lot of Dunlins and Ringed Plovers, also intent on a breakfast, were profiting by its labours, and snapped up

some of the crustaceans that managed to escape the larger hunter. But they became so persistent in dodging around him, even to snapping up such as he wished for himself, that at length, out of sheer annoyance, finding his runs and pecks at them of no avail, he betook himself off to another location, whither he evidently hoped they would not follow him.

There are some odd gatherings of birds on Breydon now and again. A common habitat throws together most diverse species at times, but it was from selfish motives that in July 1901 an assemblage of Rooks and Gulls came about. A Grey Gull had found a bit of stale salt beef—probably thrown out from a ship. He was industriously pinching off snips, and dragging and shaking it about, now backwards, now sideways. Around him had gathered thirteen Rooks, all eager to snap up the fragments that might be shaken out of the quick reach of the sea-bird, who was not anxious to leave his joint for fear of losing it. The affair wound up eventually by three other gulls coming on the scene to dispute possession, when the sable hangers-on decamped, wisely leaving the gulls to settle matters and divide the spoil between them.

At the time of writing (1903) a neighbour of

mine, who has a great liking for pet-keeping, has a big brown retriever. With the fugitive idea that somehow he may establish a sort of amateur rookery, two or three Rooks have been turned into the garden, each with one wing cut. One bird was brought up from the nest, and a noisy, downy-headed little fellow he was. He followed his master like a lap-dog, and spent most of his hours at first hanging and begging round the kitchen door. As he grew older and bolder he betook himself to the dog's kennel, glad to pick up the scraps that fell from Carlo's bones. So familiar did he become that he insisted upon sleeping in the kennel with the dog, and to sit at times perched on the canine's back, cogitating. A second Rook was added, and this too, profiting by the experiences of his predecessor, very soon joined the kennel club. A third Rook—a tired-out migrant from Scandinavia—was put with the others in October. It remains to be seen whether he will become as sociable and contented.

THE LAND DOTTEREL

Before the break-up of the North Denes by golfer, volunteer, and other pedestrians, and when the

sand dunes were quite a considerable walk from the town, the old gunners yearly expected, and often fell in with, the Land Dotterel (*Eudromias morinellus*), which was quite a usual spring immigrant. "Billy" Sampson, a gunner who frequented this locality until the early 'seventies, several times met with them in small flocks, the largest number he ever saw together being twelve. The colours of the bird, when squat and immovable, are so similar to its surroundings that when the eye is once off it it is singularly difficult to locate it again. The bird is very simple and easily stalked. Sampson affirmed that one only needed to get within range, and keep rounding them up, and most of a flock might be secured. He once shot three out of four in this manner, the fourth taking to wing whilst he was loading his old muzzle-gun.

THE WIND AND MIGRANTS

The direction pursued by birds on their migratorial trips is considerably affected by the winds prevalent at the time, as well as by the force of the same. There can be no doubt that with a continuity of strong westerly winds in October the east side

of the North Sea benefits by their numbers, just as a south-easterly wind puts the flocks this way. Birds appear to prefer a side wind rather than one behind them, and least of all a head wind. Should opposing winds be weak, however, they do not object to them, as was seen in October 1903, when for days following the 16th incredible numbers of *Corvidæ* and other land-birds came over. On the other hand, wading birds were conspicuously absent.

Quite a rush of migratorial birds occurred on 5th September 1897. Several were killed by night-fall. This rush, I thought at the time, portended a shift of the wind, which had been continuously west-south-west for several days; and within twelve hours of my recording my impression, and seeing the birds on the move, the wind veered round to the east. On a game stall on the 6th I noticed the following birds:—

10 Bar-tailed Godwits.
9 Curlew-Sandpipers.
1 Reeve.
20 Knots.

1 Sheld-duck (immature).
1 Greenshank.
1 Scaup (female).
2 Kingfishers.

The following entries may be of interest:—

Nov. 23, 1897.—Extraordinarily thick fog.

Nov. 24.—Night noisy with cries of Plovers: this

with certain other birds being "uneasy," portending bad weather. (The wind changed immediately after.)

Nov. 28.—Blew hard to-day (and next), the gale causing havoc all round the neighbourhood. Tide rose to an alarming height. The sea broke through the sandhills at Horsey.

I may also quote a note as follows :—

Sept. 20, 1899.—Wind veered yesterday from south-west to south-east. Rough wet night. To-day Breydon noisy with birds; saw some Turnstones and Whimbrel, numbers of Grey Plovers, some Green-shanks, and many small birds. Many scores of Grey Plovers were subsequently shot.

During the spring migration an easterly, and a north-easterly wind especially, favours bird-observation here. In the old days, of which the few worn-out gunners still living delight to talk, when Godwits were as common as Dunlins, "dirty" weather was always hailed by them, bringing with it, as it did, many birds a-wearied by flying "shoulder-on" on their northward journey.

Old Goodens, a man of iron constitution, who, at an age exceeding the allotted span, still ventures up Breydon eel-spearing, told me he once killed fifteen Godwits at a shot. He had seen thousands drop in on a thick drizzly morning, with a north-east

wind. They settled on a flat, on a certain 10th May, near the channel, and reached—one solid flock—five stakes in length! These Breydon channel stakes rise out of the water several hundreds of feet apart. Two days after, he added, not one Godwit was to be seen.

How the Grey Plover's movements and appearance here are connected with certain winds will be seen in the following notes copied from my entries:—

May 5, 1900.—Grey Plovers—several on Breydon noisily piping. Wind south-west.

May 6.—Wind suddenly gone round to the south-east.

May 7.—Wind very blustering all night, with squalls.

May 25.—Several Grey Plovers on Breydon (after fortnight's absence of species). Wind changed to north-east and then to south-east on the following day.

I made similar observations in 1901 as follows:—

Nov. 12.—Glass falling rapidly. Gale came on at night.

Nov. 13.—During a lull in the gale last night the air overhead was alive with Golden Plovers and other migrating waders, wind-muddled and light-attracted. Some Snipe were distinctly heard among them.

SOME AWKWARD MISTAKES

Birds, like ourselves, do not always avoid committing little errors of judgment. In January 1896 a Kestrel, noticing a movement in the herbage below it, stooped and seized what, to his surprise, turned out to be a weasel. He almost immediately dropped it; and then, hurriedly altering his mind, actually captured it again and rose in the air with it, to drop it as hurriedly once more, when the animal began squirming and shrieking. Luckily for the Kestrel, its sharp talons had inflicted injury upon its unwonted prey, and also had held it near the head, or he might have fared badly. The poor little weasel dragged itself into a hole, where, in a bad way, it lay for a while exhausted, half in and half out. It eventually recovered, and was molested by the plucky hawk no more.

In the same month I observed a large Gull stoop to the surface of Breydon and seize a bit of floating food. A Hooded Crow, observing the sea-bird's success, straightway dashed at him, and so hustled him that, to recover himself, he was obliged to drop the food. He descended again and retrieved his prize; but "Hoodie" once more dashed at him,

and again compelled him to relinquish the object of disputation. But the Crow was not nimble enough of wing to seize it, and made no effort to repossess it. Hoodie made a mistake in imagining himself a Skua.

In the spring of 1898 a hen, wanting badly to sit, contented herself by sitting most assiduously on two common stone ginger-beer bottles. It is needless to say her labours were vain; and one might almost imagine that anything so foolish could never have been attempted by any creature known to be unaddicted to the bottle!

Owing to the dryness of the season in the July of 1896, the snails and slugs in certain districts gathered into the strawberry-beds; thither the Blackbirds followed them, to the indignation of the market-gardeners, who at once not only accused them of stealing strawberries, but commenced a warfare on them. Many scores were slaughtered, and their carcasses hung up as a warning to others. What was done by the slugs upon the finest of the berries was laid to the Blackbirds' charge. Notwithstanding this, many quarts of strawberries perished for want of gathering. It was not only a pity, but a very great mistake, to slaughter so

pitilessly the friends who were ready to save the strawberries by devouring their greatest enemies, the slimy molluscs.

HYBRID DOVES

A Yarmouth pigeon fancier mated a male Almond-splashed Pigeon with a Collared Dove in 1897. After spoiling six pairs of eggs, a pair of hybrids were produced ; they were dove-like in general appearance and manners, and exceedingly timid. One bird was pale mouse-coloured, with the edging of the secondaries and the greater and lesser wing-coverts of a light brown hue. The tail was barred at the extreme end with white. The other bird was whitish, with the edgings of the afore-mentioned parts fawn coloured. The birds were healthy and strong.

At another house during the same year I saw a hybrid produced from a dark blue Tumbler and a hen Collared Dove. It was plum-coloured all over, and resembled its maternal parent in style and appearance. On the neck were the loveliest metallic-bronzed tints imaginable, reminding me of those on the American Passenger Pigeon.

BIRDS RETURNING HOME

Certain of our birds—waders, to wit—although so noticeable in their autumnal immigration, do not make much display of their return in the spring on their way to the north of Europe. I have certainly observed the Heron in one or two instances fly directly east; and also small bunches of Starlings on one or two occasions. We have influxes of spring waders—Godwits, Knots, Grey Plovers, and the like—although not so numerous as formerly, dropping in on Breydon mud flats, but it is seldom they are actually seen to leave; they do so, undoubtedly, at night. I have disturbed Terns, and seen them mount high in the air, and proceed in a north-east direction. The gathering together of certain species for the flight is not so rare. On the 1st of April 1898 I saw many scores of Hooded Crows congregated on Breydon mud flats, simply resting themselves, and holding, to all intents and purposes, an avine congress. As far as the eye could reach they were to be seen, and from the quaint manner in which one would address its nearest fellow, I was almost certain they had already paired. On 20th March 1892 I saw a similar gathering on the sand-

hills between Caister and Scratby. On 2nd April 1898 I observed a troop of Jackdaws flying direct east at a considerable elevation: their note made identification easy. Some large bunches of Starlings, flying in wedge form, due east, and very high, passed over the town on 29th March 1900.

Five Kentish Crows hung about Breydon as late as 11th May 1900. One had a slightly injured wing, and was unable to fly to any great distance. His companions, who were evidently concerned about his welfare, at length finding it would or could not join them, left it to its own devices.

A TOWN ROOKERY

The successful attempts made by Rooks to establish a colony in the heart of Yarmouth have been a matter of no little interest to residents living in the market-place and its neighbourhood. Each spring since that of 1896 has found the birds in more or less numbers resorting to the trees immediately to the left of the Hospital School, in the old disused cemetery at the rear of the market-place. Early in April of that year a pair built a nest there. Odd birds at various times visited the couple

settled there, and seemed to beg fun of them. Seven Rooks were observed around the nest on the 10th. Young birds were nearly fledged on 24th May, when some brute climbed the tree, and in sheer wantonness sawed off the limb, dropping nest and young birds to the ground. In the March of 1897 a pair of Rooks again put in an appearance, remained for a day or two, and then left the place entirely for that year. In 1901 others again looked in for a day or two, and in 1902 two nests were built; but during a very severe gale both nests were completely destroyed. One might think that the birds weighed the matter over in their minds, and decided in the end that, as an act of Providence had upset their hopes, and not human interference, they might as well try again in 1903, which they did, when no less than seven nests, six of them inhabited, decorated the trees. The good wishes of the townsfolk went out to them, being especially voiced during the gales of March and April, which they survived. Something like a score youngsters were reared, and in time crossed the town to the Breydon marshes with their parents, who had frequently passed and re-passed with provender from the neighbourhood of that favourite estuary. "The oldest inhabitant"

cannot remember ever before seeing a colony of Rooks in the heart of the town, although rookeries are common enough in various parts of Gorleston.

THE SHAG

The Shag (*Phalacrocorax graculus*) makes an exceedingly interesting pet. I purchased one of a smacksman in March 1898. He was giving it a swim in the river, keeping it captive by means of a long cord tied to its leg, and by means of which he dragged it ignominiously on board the smack again. I kept it for some weeks. It soon answered to my call, and would catch easily the fish thrown to it. When hungry it uttered a harsh, discordant, trumpeting note, unlike another I kept later, which made no sound at all. It ate, or rather swallowed, about a pound and a half of fish per day, including bones (mostly cut-up fish heads and skate); the bones it vomited, after digesting the muscular parts around them. Another came into my possession in September 1903. Like its predecessors, it never drank or even dipped its bill into water while in my care. It became exceedingly tame, and would come into the house boldly, as if it preferred the warmth

of the fireside to its own outside lodgings. Locally this species seems to turn up more frequently now than in years gone by.

SOME STRANGE FATALITIES

Some bricklayers working on a roof in the heart of the town in April 1899 called to me from the scaffolding, asking me to inspect a large niche in a half-demolished chimney where lay huddled together no less than fifteen bird skeletons, which I immediately identified as those of Jackdaws. In all probability the chimney had been the birthplace of generations of those birds, and the perfectly clean, bare skeletons discovered were doubtless those of young birds that had either tumbled out of the nest or had died and been thrown out by the parent birds. Not a particle of flesh, sinew, or feather remained, this being due, mayhap, to the attentions of mice, blowflies, and moths. I had known the house since childhood, but could not remember Jackdaws having ever inhabited its chimneys.

That blowflies find out carcasses in a most mysterious fashion is evidenced by my finding, in two instances, the remains of Swifts that had

probably lost their lives in striking the parish church steeple, and fallen on the leads at its base, just above the clock. The bones beneath the feathers were in both cases bare, and in one, indeed, a few larval cases remained. The blowflies must have caught the scent of the dead birds when atmospheric depression brought it earthwards, although I am not certain that these dipterous insects do not occasionally fly at as great an elevation. That scent will draw insects to great distances is evidenced by the finding of the carcass of a porpoise on Aldeburgh beach, four miles from any habitation, yet simply alive with the larvæ of the green blowfly.

CURIOUS MANŒUVRES

One of the oddest performances I ever saw on Breydon took place on the early morning of 17th August 1899. Hearing a number of Black-headed Gulls on the flat opposite my houseboat, I cautiously looked out to see the scarcely bare flat covered with these birds, all screaming in turn as if the bright morning were a real delight to them; and what was odd enough, they literally danced all over the place, each bird lifting its feet and pattering on the mud,

without moving away, as if dancing a hornpipe. Evidently, from the frequent pauses made by each bird to pick up something, the unusual disturbance of the mud caused sundry crustaceans and worms to come in terror to the surface—the very result intended by the birds. I have seen the same manoeuvre executed several times since. A few evenings prior to this I was sitting in the dusk at the stern of my houseboat when I noticed a Gull behaving in a very strange way, and after some careful glimpses at him through my telescope I found he had fast in his gullet a flounder much too large to be comfortably swallowed. The poor thing described a number of circles, and gradually came my way. I had prepared to slip out on to the mud, should he come near enough, in order to help him in some way or other; but for all his caperings he became distrustful of my presence, and vanished, still curveting, into the gathering gloom. In all probability it was the last flounder he ever tackled.

In August 1899 a large Grey Gull captured a flounder he was utterly incapable of swallowing. A companion bullied him, chasing him up and down and around in the air for nearly a mile, the rightful

possessor as persistently sticking to his find. How they settled the matter I do not know, for they passed beyond my sight.

MOSTLY SNIPE NOTES

It has often been the case, in my experience, that if we get snow and frost before Christmas, our local gunners have what they term "a bit of tolerable sport"; but should like conditions obtain only after the advent of the New Year, their chances are poor enough. The following notes copied from my diary are interesting as showing how a few frosty days affect the Snipe. I made a few lists of victims that appeared from day to day on a local game stall:—

Dec. 11, 1899.—A three-inch fall of snow last night. Frost coming with it drove southwards to this neighbourhood great numbers of Snipe. Common and Jack Snipe abundant everywhere. Durrant had the following birds to-day:—

Snipe, 47.

Lapwings, 14.

Dunlins, 23.

Wild Duck, 4.

Jack Snipe, 17.

Golden Plovers, 10.

Wigeon, 3.

Woodcock, 1.

Dec. 13.—Yesterday a similar number of Snipe on the stall. To-day—

Woodcocks, 8.	Coots, 40.
Snipe, 120.	Dunlins, 40.
Jack Snipe, 20.	Duck and Mallard, 14.
Spotted Rail, 2.	Wigeon, 9.

Dec. 14.—Millions of radiated trough shells (*Macra stultorum*) scoured up by tide and thrown ashore. The presence of these tempted many wild-fowl here. Marshes covered with snow. Gunners all on the alert for Snipe. To-day's list—

Snipe, 43.	Dunlins, 60.
Lapwings, 6.	Ducks, 12.

Dec. 15—

Heron, 1.	Teal, 1.
Lapwings, 12.	Golden Plovers, 4
Wigeon, 4.	Dunlins, 179.
Shovelers, 3.	Pochards, 7.
Curlew, 1.	Moorhens, 9.
Duck, 30.	Woodcock, 1.

The Snipe were sent daily to London. The Curlew above referred to weighed $2\frac{1}{4}$ lbs.

Dec. 16—

Snipe, 310.	Dunlins, 336.
Duck and Mallard, 32.	Half-fowl, 90.
Dabchicks, 6.	Water Rails, 12.
Lapwings, 26.	Goosander, 1.

The half-fowl were Tufted Ducks, Golden-eyes, etc.

The Common Snipe nests very sparingly in the lowlands around Yarmouth. I knew a pair to nest on a low, swampy bit of fen a few score yards beyond Belton Station. By the Broads it is of less infrequent occurrence. The Snipe puts in an appearance on our marshes in some numbers on the approach of frost. In the early 'eighties a severe frost shut up all the ditches and solidified the fenny places farther north. The brackish "deeks" of our own immediate neighbourhood in one night became swarmed; and for a day or two after every gunner was incessantly blazing away as the birds were flushed continually by the tramp of feet and snuffing of dogs. Hundreds were killed. The frost continued, and after the third day the numbers began perceptibly to lessen, and in less than a week not a bird was to be found. But directly there was a break, a rush back took place, although very few birds were then secured.

It is a very rare circumstance to meet with this species on Breydon. I observed one on a hot day in 1901 feeding along with a parcel of Dunlins. Its favourite resorts had in all probability been dried up by a long-continued drought.

In an old edition of Gilbert White's *Selborne*, that had belonged to an Aldeburgh sportsman, I saw written on the margin the following note:—

Snipe at Worm.—"When at Aldbro' I shot a great many Snipes. One day I shot a Jack, and upon my dog bringing it to me, I found a small red worm protruding from the mouth. I ever afterwards drew my finger and thumb tightly up the outside of the throat, and several times I have by this means drawn the same description of worm from them. And I have no doubt the Woodcock eats the same."

During one of the rushes of Snipe in the old days, a young fellow called in at a since deceased game dealer's, after the shop had been closed, carrying in his pockets the proceeds of the day's shooting. The dealer sat reading his newspaper behind the counter.

"What do you want?" he curtly asked of the young fellow.

"I've brought some Snipe," said he, emptying his pocket. "I believe you buy 'em?"

The dealer coolly took up several of the birds, and then critically eyeing the sportsman, asked where he obtained them.

"Up the river walls, on such and such a marsh," he replied.

"Oh! so you've been not only shooting *game*, but obtained them on Squire ——'s land, eh? Just wait while I fetch a policeman!"

It is needless to say the young sportsman took alarm, and precipitately bolted, leaving his game behind him. He has not yet, according to report, returned to settle the deal or make inquiries respecting the Snipe.

A most unusual movement of Snipe took place in the middle of November 1903. From two independent sources I was informed that "from four hundred to five hundred" of these birds alighted on a "hover"—a floating portion of rond. They were described as literally alighting upon each other. A wherry sailing by at the time put them up, when they crossed over it, some passing between the mast and the bobstay.

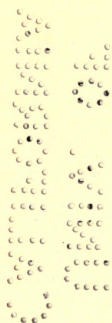
An old Breydoner who excelled at punt gunning in the 'fifties and 'sixties assured me that old Thomas (the late Johnny Thomas's father) was surprised one evening by a large flock of "unknown" (unrecognised) birds alighting on a rond on Breydon, not far from him. Owing to snow and inability to locate



Frank Southgate

AUTUMN

WADERS ON THE BREYDON MUDS—LITTLE STINT, CURLEW, DUNLIN, AND CURLEW-SANDPETER



them, Thomas drew up to the walls, and in spite of the severity of the night, slept there. Waking before daylight, he found his way at daybreak to the spot, and managed to get a shot at what he now saw to be Snipe. There were hundreds; and at one pull he killed several scores, "covering," as my informant said, "the punt floor with them, half fillin' it!"

THE CURLEW

In August large female Curlews, occasionally with long bills, frequent Breydon; sometimes the flocks are of considerable size. I am of opinion that a few non-breeding birds remain in the vicinity all summer, betaking themselves to the marshes, and even farther afield, for short periods, returning at intervals to their favourite ooze. Nereid worms, mollusca, shrimps, small crabs, and tiny flounders are its usual prey. A tame Curlew became exceedingly partial to small dead mice, soaked and knocked about until considered fit for swallowing. A Curlew was set upon by a small hawk. The wader squatted upon the mud, presenting its bill to its tormentor, a process that had the effect of either wearing out the latter's patience or of

intimidating it. It left the Curlew at length to its own devices, and went in search of something more easily conquered.

Curlews, when on feed, snatch at every little passing flounder. Small ones they bolt in an instant, but any too large for swallowing are knocked, shaken, and twisted about, and prodigious efforts are made to bolt them; till at length, finding all their efforts vain, they appear regretfully to throw them down. What most amuses me is the way a disappointed bird immediately after trots along as fast as his legs can carry him to seek for some more manageable item, as if there were lost time to be made up.

A WATCHER'S NOTEBOOK

For several years past a watcher has been stationed on Breydon during the close season for wild birds. Moored in the centre of that estuary is his house-boat, from which it is his duty to keep a sharp eye upon all persons likely to break the law by shooting, or attempting to shoot, the various waders using Breydon mud flats. The first man employed was a big old fellow known as "Ducker" Chambers.

Whether true or not, it is rumoured of him that, when a rare bird was known to be using Breydon, it was not a difficult task for an interested party to decoy him into some favourite resort, whilst another would slip into a punt and either secure or attempt to shoot the coveted prize. It may or it may not be that more than one Spoonbill vanished, not by proceeding on its migration, but in a way not intended by the Act. Old Chambers kept a rough sort of diary, and from day to day, or when the humour seized him, it was his custom to jot down in rough numbers the birds that came into his view from time to time. It goes without saying that in so large an area he did not see all that came. I append a few entries, which may be interesting for purposes of comparison :—

1888

April 13. White-winged Tern.	June 12. 1 Spoonbill.
May 20. 3 Spoonbills.	„ 21. 3 Spoonbills.
June 3. 6 Spoonbills.	July 18. 1 Spoonbill ; various
„ 8. 2 Spoonbills.	small waders.

1889

March 10. 200 Wigeon.	March 15. 400 Wigeon, 18 Mal-
„ 11. 4 Sheld-ducks.	lard, and some
„ 13. 17 Pintailed Ducks.	Teal.

1889—*continued*

March 16. 2000 Wigeon.	April 12. 3 Goosanders.
„ 22. 200 Wigeon, 12 Mallard, etc.	May 12. Godwits, Whimbrel, etc.
„ 24. 200 Wigeon, few Golden-eyes and Shovelers.	„ 19. 1 Spoonbill.
„ 28. 100 Wigeon.	June 11. 1 Spoonbill.
„ 31. 4 Sheld-ducks.	„ 18. 2 Goosanders.
	„ 25. 4 Sheld-ducks.
	July 4. 1 Spoonbill.

1890

March 2. Over 200 Wigeon.	May 24. Several Greenshanks and Redshanks.
„ 5. 65 Shovelers.	„ 25. 6 Cormorants, 4 Black Terns; many small birds.
„ 6. 11 Geese.	June 4. 4 Sheld-ducks.
„ 9. 300 Wigeon, 2 Golden-eyes; Ring Plovers and Dunlins.	„ 13. 3 Barnacle Geese.
„ 14. 60 Godwits; Whimbrel and Plovers.	„ 24. Numerous Redshanks.

1891

March 2. 40 Wigeon, 30 Geese.	April 12. 4 Golden-eyes.
„ 7. 20 Wigeon, 3 Sheld-ducks.	„ 15. 2 Swans.
„ 8. 12 Swans.	May 12. 200 Godwits; numerous Whimbrel.
„ 15. 70 Geese.	„ 29. 4 Swans.
„ 17. 6 Sheld-ducks.	June 14. 2 Spoonbills.
„ 19. 2 Swans.	„ 15. 3 Avocets.
„ 22. 2 Goosanders; many small birds.	July 14. 9 Sheld-ducks.
„ 24. 4 Goosanders.	„ 17. 6 Young Mallard.
April 6. 500 Wigeon, Pintails, and Teal.	„ 18. 5 Sheld-ducks.

1892

March 6.	30	Wigeon, 5	Geese.	May 16.	200	Godwits; numer-	
May	2.	Eagle (white-tailed).				ous	Turnstones and
„	8.	2	Goosanders.			Whimbrel.	
„	10.	4	Black Terns.	„	19.	17	Cormorants, 2
„	12.	5	Sheld-ducks,			Sheld-ducks.	
			Whimbrel.				

The entries in succeeding years are fragmentary, but much on a par with the preceding. Chambers seemed to tire of the “literary” part of his duties, and very often omitted weeks of arrivals altogether. Five years ago a younger man succeeded him on his retirement into the Fishermen’s Almshouses. Jary—the new man—was not to be played with, and by exercising much greater vigilance, kept would-be shooters entirely in the background. It is rare, indeed, save from a passing yacht containing a smuggled rifle and a holidaying fool, to hear a shot from the 1st of March to the end of the close season. A few entries from Jary’s book would be as interesting as those of his predecessor, but the examples given are sufficient to convey a fairly good idea of the birds that visit us on their northward journey.

I must, however, state that since stricter preservation has obtained, not nearly so many birds

are to be seen on Breydon; but other causes than *preservation* must be blamed for this falling off, although the fact gives rise to no small cynicism and sarcasm amongst those who feel aggrieved at not being allowed to shoot the few that even to-day put in an appearance.

YOUNG CUCKOOS

In this locality the Meadow Pipit, in my experience, is the most favoured (?) foster-parent of the young Cuckoo: in almost every instance where I have met with a fledgling it has been in the lowly built nest of this species. The young Cuckoo grows very rapidly, and seems to be not only an exceedingly hungry, quarrelsome creature, but very easy to rear. On one occasion I obtained one from under a gravestone out of a Pipit's nest, and brought it up to full feather simply on a diet of bullock's lights.

In a cabbage garden the caterpillar of the garden white butterfly was committing woeful havoc, and the owner despaired of cutting any fit for cooking. In the midst of his grumbling, a young Cuckoo of the year appeared, and commenced to wage war

upon the insect pests by devouring them. Day after day the Cuckoo was welcomed, and in a very short time had cleared the patch, and saved the situation.

On the margin of an old book I found pencilled the following: "I have found in my lifetime five young Cuckoos in their nests, four being those of the Pied Wagtail, and the other a Hedge Sparrow's. In one of the nests, which was in a sawpit, were four young Wagtails and the Cuckoo. One day, on going to look at them, I found two of the Wagtails upon the ground directly under the nest. Thinking they might be put out by the Cuckoo, I watched them rather narrowly, and the next day I saw the Cuckoo wriggle himself until he got one of the remaining Wagtails on his back, when he raised himself, and shot the Wagtail out of the nest. On the following day I found the other Wagtail on the ground, no doubt got rid of by the Cuckoo in the same way to make room for himself."

The same hand had also pencilled as follows: "I do not see that Mr. Hoy's finding of two eggs in one nest proves that the Cuckoo lays more than one egg, as in all probability the eggs were deposited by different birds; but still, I do not see that the Cuckoo should be restricted to the laying of one egg only."

Some sneaking sort of belief still obtains among certain ignorant folk with regard to the ill-luck attending the appearance of Cuckoos. A young Cuckoo flew over the house of an old lady in the town while I stood speaking to her at the door. When I pointed out the retreating bird to her, she begged of me to say it was *not* a Cuckoo—"anything but that, for it was the unluckiest thing in the world should one fly over one's roof." Some still affect to believe that to see three Cuckoos in succession portends a death in the observer's family circle.

THE STORM-PETREL

The Storm-Petrel does not visit us so frequently now as in the days when herrings were landed on the beach (see Fishermen Sportsmen). Now and again a severe gale or a succession of boisterous storms from the northward bring some into the neighbourhood, when the keen observer may detect the small dark birds tripping along just beyond the breakers, and now and again meet with one blown inland, weary and exhausted. In the October of 1901 I observed a group of fishermen on the fish wharf surrounding one of their fellows who had

in his hands a small paper pastry-bag from which a poor little Petrel was looking out in some surprise. I purchased it, and took it home, where it soon learned to peck at soft herring-milts hung within its reach. It would run up and down its new domicile with wings vertically raised, uttering a peepy cry very like that of a newly hatched turkey-chick. It lived but a few days, having never recovered the rough treatment it received from the North Sea gale and the equally rough attentions of its not unkindly disposed captor.

Mr. Booth (*Catalogue of Birds*) says: "I have often noticed these poor little birds terribly distressed by the buffetings they receive during a protracted gale, at times hovering and settling among the breakers and occasionally being carried before some blinding squall, almost helpless, inland. After a storm of several days' duration in November 1872 I observed scores of these birds resting on the water off the coast of Norfolk apparently worn out, with their heads buried in their feathers. On visiting one of the lightships, I learned that several of the stormy, as well as a single specimen of the fork-tailed petrel, had come on board while the gale was at its height."

It was about this time that a local sportsman, tramping the beach in quest of fowl, saw a number of Petrels at the harbour mouth. He had only big shot with him, but succeeded in killing nine birds. He took snap-shots at them as they neared the crest of a wave and before they fell back into the trough of the sea. Having disposed of four brace at four shillings a couple, he took the last bird to a game dealer.

"I suppose you've hawked round," said the dealer, "as many as you could sell, and brought this one to me?"

"What matters that to you?" asked the gunner. "I only ask you if you'll buy it. I want two shillings for it."

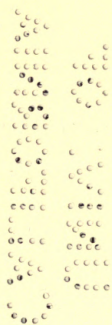
The dealer gave him three-fourths of that amount, when, to his just annoyance, the man saucily told him he had sold eight already to persons from whom the dealer had actually received orders to obtain specimens for them!

"LOCALITY" IN BIRDS

I have already shown in the case of the Grey Wag-tail how that species persists in returning, even when



A RARE VISITOR
CASPIAN PLOVER



repeatedly disturbed, to certain chosen localities. I have noticed this propensity for "locality" by preference in several birds. The Redshanks bred on the Waveney and Bure marshes, in August invariably frequent a flat near the Lockgate Farm, two miles from the Vauxhall Station, on the North Walls of Breydon. This is quite in front of the rond-cutting in which my houseboat has been moored for several years. As soon as the water falls the birds come back to the flat, determinedly feeding there until the returning flood once more washes them off it. A large rond, a few hundred yards from my location, is used at high water by Curlews, who retire to its sheltering grasses to preen their plumage and sleep until the falling tide allows them again a footing on the mud flats. The Saddleback Gulls prefer the five-stake drain "lumps" for a sleeping resort. There stands a tall tree or two on the west side of St. Nicholas Church. There, at the closing of the day, at certain periods of the year, gather together for a noisy concert hundreds of Sparrows, before scattering to their several sleeping-places.

The Hoopoe has this peculiar habit of returning to a favourite spot even after being disturbed. An old gunner, named Sampson, who when a young man

was keenly alert to the ways and manners of birds, noticed this habit, or weakness, and on putting up a Hoopoe from a furzy corner, hid near the spot and awaited its return with fatal result to the poor bird. It is usually exceedingly wary and shy, and but for his hiding, no doubt that example would have fought shy of him. Sampson killed four in his day, and made about four shillings apiece off them. The highest figure I have known given was three guineas for two stuffed specimens in the Horsey sale.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the "allotment" marshes were a favourite resort of many wildfowl. Various ducks came over from sea at nightfall to feed on the large pools and lagoons that formed in rainy spells, when the windmills were unable to cope with the downfall. The place was full of molluscous life. Numerous gunners frequented that locality; one old man, whom I knew, at that time supported his family with his gun. To this day, although the fact does not seem generally known, small parcels of fowl in the autumn and early winter drop in to feed in the ditches at night, and depart by daylight. I have stood in certain well-defined "leads," and seen and heard the birds pass over in the dim light of eventide or early morning.

ACTING ON THE DEFENSIVE

Birds are seldom aggressive; they do not often attack other species when in a state of liberty, and seldom seriously quarrel amongst themselves. A Starling will sometimes dispute possession of a place on a dunghill when worms or the larvæ of flies are abundant, but anything like a serious scuffle is out of the question, even when pretending to box, as they will do, sometimes even springing up from the ground in noisy dispute. When a Gull has seized upon a titbit found floating upon the water, it sometimes happens that a parcel of his fellows will come noisily protesting against his keeping it, and occasionally one or more will give chase. In this case, his idea seems to be to get away with it, and a long, circling, zigzag fly-round ensues, in which the pursuers, in most cases, give in first.

But when a bird is wounded, and his human enemy seeks to lay hold of him, something like a fight for life and liberty takes place. I have seen a wounded Heron fight most savagely, darting lightning-like thrusts with his dangerous bill at man and dog. Wounded or handled gulls will seize fingers with such petulancy and promptness that one must

admit that these creatures know they have not only the power of inflicting pain, but where to inflict it, distinguishing easily enough, it would seem, where to, and where not to, grip and nip. The larger gulls can make a nasty cut on one's hand. The Shag draws blood easily by seizing one's digits, and nipping with the sharp curved point of its upper mandible. Crows dig at you, as do Divers and Grebes. I had an unpleasant experience on one occasion, when trying to capture a broken-winged Short-eared Owl. Its needle-like claws drilled several bleeding punctures.

An old gunner named Sampson had shot a Short-eared Owl, winging it. He essayed to pick it up, but the poor defiant thing, ruffling and staring, flung itself upon its back, seizing the fingers of one hand in its claws. When the gunner tried to free himself with the other hand, the owl seized the fingers of that also, holding him absolutely a prisoner. Do what he would he could not get clear of it, and was obliged at length to kneel upon his victim, and, as he said, "let out its wind." It gradually relaxed its hold as the life went out of it, and finally Sampson got free. He told me his fingers bled freely, and were very sore, and further-

more, that he was always very careful after that of handling Woodcock Owls!

In 1901 a young pair of Swifts discovered a hole under the tiles of a comparatively new house near my own. I believe they successfully reared young ones. Returning in the spring of 1902, the couple made for their old habitation, but found a pair of saucy, defiant Sparrows in possession. Attempting in ignorance to enter, the male bird found one of the new lodgers at home, and he immediately came out with the Sparrow fastened on to his neck. Together they fell scuffling and squealing to the ground. A friendly next-door neighbour, seeing the state of things, put the Sparrow to flight, whilst the astonished Swift, after one or two awkward attempts, got again upon the wing. The rescuer settled matters in favour of the Swifts by destroying the Sparrows with a catapult. The Swifts remained for that season, but for some unknown reason—death, perhaps—did not return to the house in the following spring.

THE AVOCET

The most exquisitely beautiful of all the wading birds upon the Yarmouth list is, to my mind, the

Avocet. It has seldom been my privilege to see it on Breydon mud flats. The largest number I ever saw together was on 4th May 1887, when four in a flock passed by me within a few yards, so near, in fact, that with regret I have to state I brought one down to my gun. Such a beautiful creation certainly ought to have been saved from my brutal hand. But at that time I had an itching for both gun and "specimens." The day before six had been seen, but two were killed; and eventually nearly every one was "accounted for." Another gunner, later on the 4th, fired at the party, his gun being loaded with swan-shot. He pricked one, and saw it falter in its flight. Following the direction taken by the birds, he at length came up with the wounded one, swimming. Again he shot at it, when it determinedly dived. Watching it in the deep water of the channel below him, he saw the bird rising to the surface to breathe, when, plunging in his hand, he seized it ere it had reached the surface.

The Avocet usually comes singly, and it is only once in two or three years that it is noticed. It then affects the society of the smaller gulls, Black-heads in particular, from which it is not easily distinguished, for the reason, perhaps, that it is so

rarely with us that its presence is not suspected, and few give more than a passing glance at a flock of gulls dozing on a flat or floating in a drain.

The Avocet bred constantly and in some numbers at Horsey early in the nineteenth century. Lubbock¹ speaks of an old and respectable fenman assuring him "that forty years ago" (Lubbock wrote in 1845) "it bred regularly near the Seven-Mile House on the river Bure."

THE WAYS OF WADERS

Just as every wader has its distinctive note, so has it its own peculiar methods of flight, run, and feeding. The pert Ringed Plover, when feeding, never forgets to have one or more chums watching: it seldom covers more than two feet of mud, usually running three or four steps and then stopping, unless a pedestrian is hard upon its track, when it endeavours to outdistance him before attempting again to pick up its crustacean prey. The Dunlin is less deliberate, and erratically runs a greater or lesser distance before looking for a likely worm-hole. The Curlew-Sandpiper is more energetic than either of them, for it probes the mud at almost every step,

¹ *Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk.*

thrusting its beak in pretty well up to the hilt each time, sometimes withdrawing it with its face quite muddy. The Turnstone appears always in a hurry, as if eager to get over a certain area in a given time. In this locality the Sanderling, like the Oyster-catcher and the Purple-Sandpiper, much prefers the beach to Breydon mud flats; but only in the very bitterest weather in winter do we expect to see the Sanderling on the sands. In the spring migration a few usually visit Breydon as well as the shore. The Knot is exceedingly sociable, and in most instances, except when in fair-sized flocks, attaches itself to a parcel of small waders. The Common Sandpiper prefers the river margins to Breydon; and, when found on that estuary, invariably keeps to the immediate neighbourhood of the flint walls, seldom being seen feeding out in the open. Young Redshanks very industriously pursue opossum shrimps at the river margin: when on Breydon mud flats they pipe considerably when feeding, often hunting for their prey with the water level with their bellies. The Green-shank, like Ruffs of the year, appears partial to the small puddles of still water to be found in ronds. The Godwit is not noisy when feeding; the Green-shank, the Whimbrel, and Dunlin are quite the

reverse. The Spoonbill never utters a sound beyond the faint clap of its mandibles when suddenly brought together. Mr. J. H. Gurney, however, assures me the Spoonbill is not voiceless, for on one occasion he heard a couple, probably under the influence of the season and a fine day, utter a feeble trumpet-like note, while dancing in the odd way peculiar to birds of the Stork family. Spoonbills work the soft mud in a very deliberate and methodical manner, spooning it from side to side. Usually a flock work together; where one leads the others follow like so many sheep. When flying they proceed in single file, with necks and legs extended, looking singularly white against the blue sky or grey horizon. When shifting ground they will sometimes swim across an intervening creek. They travel a long way when feeding, and one might almost imagine they are ever considering a distant puddle to be more desirable than the one they are at the moment working.

SOME ODD SHOTS

This is not to me a pleasing subject—the wanton killing of birds—that the heading suggests. Too many birds are shot and aimed at simply to gratify

a love of slaughter and the pride of marksmanship. However, as I have used the gun, and, I fear, been guilty of similar practices in my earlier days, there have been "kills" that struck me as being of more than ordinary interest, from a sportsman's point of view. One of my earliest shots was at a Swift, which received but one pellet at a considerable height above my head. The poor thing was killed instantly, but came down with its wings comparatively stiff, and extended, reaching the earth in a rotary manner, very much after the fashion of a sycamore "pen" or seed that children throw up for the purpose. But it took an extraordinary time to come down. Another I saw shot flew away at least five hundred yards from the gunner, and describing a complete circle, boomerang-like, actually wheeled round, and fell dead at our feet!

One July morning, when out shooting by the Bure, I decoyed a Redshank within shooting distance. Following the bird with my gun, before pulling the trigger, it came into direct line with a brilliant sun, which entirely closed my eyes. I had, however, so accurately judged the rate of flight, and its direction, that before I could properly see again, I fired, and to my surprise heard a "plump" upon

the rond, immediately followed by another, and was still more astonished to see a second bird lying dead. It had, unknown to me, crossed the other in its flight at the identical moment of firing.

An old friend used to be very partial to moonlight strolls along Breydon walls in the days when there were neither gun licences nor close seasons. One evening he saw the *shadow* of a Greenshank, and fired at where he thought the bird might be. To his surprise he heard a double fall, "flop—flop"—as he expressed it—on the mud, and found that his shot had completely halved the bird!

The zest with which many sportsmen recount the adventures and circumstances attending the slaughter of rare birds, and the remarkable results of their shots, certainly, to me, savours somewhat of the callous, and does not speak much for the value they place upon the lives of the lower animals, which, I am bound to admit, after having been somewhat of a sportsman myself, have quite as much right to live, and be happy, as I have. I must confess to having feelings of repugnance when I hear men talk of the ways—ay! even laugh at the antics and efforts—of stricken and maimed birds to regain their feet and freedom. To hear of "lanes" being cut through

Curlews, the moment before merrily piping and feeding on a mud flat, is not to me edifying. Nor are the records of "big" shots ever anything but distasteful. An old gunner, with seeming pride, told me that his biggest shot secured him 285 Dunlins and 5 Wigeon. He did not count the cripples that fluttered away. These birds were crowded together on a huge slab of floating ice, and it cost him some labour to force his gun punt through the pack in order to make this shot.

Some years ago an old gunner, lying with his boat in a wake in the ice, while waiting for wildfowl, settled himself to eat his dinner. A brilliantly plumaged Kingfisher, the best he had ever set eyes upon (and which is now said to be in Norwich Museum), alighted on the extreme end of his punt gun. He longed to secure the bird, but having no "hand gun," he was puzzled to know how to effect a capture. It suddenly occurred to him that the "vibration," as he termed it, of a discharge might kill the bird; so he stealthily, inch by inch, reached towards the trigger, which he managed at length to pull. The gun went off with a roar, and dead as a stone dropped the poor little Kingfisher into the water beneath.

A CORVINE IMMIGRATION

18th and 19th October are always days of interest to me, for under normal conditions various members of the Crow tribe may be looked for coming in from sea in greater or lesser numbers. On the first date in 1903 a remarkable immigration set in, and on the next day great "rushes" of Hooded Crows, Rooks, Crows, Jackdaws, and Starlings, as well as small perching birds, were observed passing overhead. The whole day long, from dawn until night, incessant streams—the Rooks and Crows in straggling flocks of from twelve to thirty in a flock—were leisurely pouring in as if they had had a fine passage with no wind to tire them. The local wind was south-westerly at the time. Hundreds of Jackdaws in compact flocks, flying very high, passed over, for once remarkably mute: their custom is to noisily prate over their arrival.

Most of the birds I saw appeared in no way fatigued, although an intelligent fisherman informed me subsequently that a number of Jackdaws and others had dropped down upon the boom and rigging of his drifter, as well as on others, for rest: this was on the 20th, after a wet, baffling night.

Moisture seems to tire the birds far more than an adverse wind. I myself noticed that the birds flew in on that date with seemingly greater effort, and unsteadier flight. A Rook alighting on the beach at this time was seized by a stroller, and notwithstanding its protests and struggles, brought to me in a handkerchief. Placing him in an aviary, I supplied him with a couple of boiled potatoes; these he readily ate, and then commenced to search for a loophole of escape, evidently desirous of continuing his journey.

THE VALUE OF BIRDS

When conversing with two veteran sportsmen—men whose names were, thirty and forty years ago, identical, indeed almost synonymous, with Breydon—I was interested in the way they disposed of their game, and in the prices made off it. In the 'fifties and 'sixties a Bittern would make at a game dealer's about two shillings; Avocets about four shillings and sixpence; a Quail fetched a penny; a Wigeon sixpence; a Land-Dotterel, threepence; and Hoopoes four shillings apiece.

That they obtained goodly numbers in those "wild open" days goes without saying, or these

men had not brought up families on their earnings! Prior to the 'sixties, the gunners used to stay out all night, their boys bringing their breakfasts up the walls in the morning, and returning with their father's "bags"—the smaller game being tied up in sacks or in baskets, the ducks tied by the head and slung on sticks carried on the shoulder.

One noted wildfowler known as "Storks" sent his wife with the fowl to a local game dealer, who used to laugh about her light-handed ways—"she never brought a handkerchief of birds but he missed a fowl or two after she was gone." That this particular dealer had vast numbers of fowl brought in is evident from the fact that when a friend of mine succeeded him in the shop, he described the floor as being saturated with blood, so much so, that the stain could be seen (having worked through the boards) in the cellar!

Reverting to the prices given: one man gladly accepted three and sixpence for a Purple Heron. A good Godwit "in the red" realised sixpence, and a "grey" threepence; while Spoonbills ran from three shillings to six according to condition. Sixpence was given for as many Kentish Plovers.

In those days wildfowl were so plentiful in sharp

wintry weather, more especially "hard" fowl,—*i.e.* Golden-eyes, Tufted Ducks, Scaups, and Pochards,—that cripples were seldom pursued: it did not pay for the time lost in recovering them; and few carried a shoulder gun to "settle" the poor things, which were left to struggle until drowning mercifully ended their sufferings, or the wind and tide drifted them to the walls, where, in the hollows and holes in the stone embankment, they hid to die slowly, or to fall into the clutches of the rats, which there "lived like fighting cocks." Certain men who had no guns would patrol the walls, assisted in their search by keen-scented mongrel dogs. In this way they sometimes made quite a bag of crippled birds, and so earned a day's wage by disposing of them. The Messrs. Paget¹ make reference to a dog kept by a marshman, which on its own account used to thus search for wounded fowl, taking them home by the nearest cut—across ditches and over stiles to its master.

That better prices were sometimes obtained for unusual "curios," as strange birds were called, is true, for some of the 'cutter wildfowlers were on the

¹ *Sketch of the Natural History of Yarmouth*, by C. J. and J. Paget, 1834.

lookout for such to supply collectors, bird stuffers, and in some instances interested parties outside the town. Placed beside the figures above mentioned, the prices made by rare birds in recent years will show the almost fictitious value resulting from increased competition or rarity. The difference, even in ten or twelve years, in prices made will be shown in the following lists:—

1. Overend's sale of uncased local birds, 16th June 1876—

£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Rough-legged Hobby	Buffon's Skua (male) . 0 14 0
Osprey . . . 0 18 0	Eared Grebe (male) . 0 9 0
Orange-legged Hobby. 1 0 0	Red-necked Phalarope
Ruff and Reeve . . 0 6 0	(male) . . . 0 16 0
Hobby . . . 0 6 0	Grey Phalarope and
Brunnick's Guillemot . 0 3 6	Purple-Sandpiper . 0 9 0
Hoopoe (male) . . 0 13 0	Fork-tailed Petrel . 0 5 0
Bittern (male) . . 0 10 0	Avocet . . . 3 5 0
Black-throated Diver	White Stork . . . 2 15 0
(male) . . . 0 12 0	Shorelark . . . 0 2 6
Spoonbill (male). . 1 6 0	

There were 96 uncased lots, numbering in all 180 specimens.

2. The Rising Collection at Horsey was dispersed in 1885, when 142 lots realised £340; a few are figured below. Most of the birds were in cases.

	£ s. d.		£ s. d.
Marsh Harriers (male and female) . . .	4 4 0	Red-crested Whistling Duck . . .	21 10 6
Whiskered Tern . . .	6 16 6	Black-tailed Godwits (male and female) . .	2 12 6
Roseate Tern . . .	0 10 6	Ruffs (six specimens) .	3 3 0
White-winged Black Tern . . .	12 12 0	Eared Grebe (male and female—summer) .	4 14 6
Black Terns (male and female) . . .	3 3 0	Little Bitterns (male and female) . . .	5 5 0
Black Stork . . .	11 11 0	Spoonbills (male and female) . . .	10 10 0
Brown Snipe . . .	13 13 0	Purple-Sandpipers (male and female) . .	1 1 0
Hoopoes (male and female) . . .	3 3 0		
Buffel-headed Duck .	26 5 0		

SHORT NOTES FROM THE DIARY

In making notes from day to day not a few interesting items, short and concise, yet considered of value by the author, have been jotted down. Scarcely of sufficient moment to enlarge into paragraphs, they are here given under the separate years. Their brevity will be as noticeable as their variety.

1878

Sept. 17.—Kingfishers have been very numerous in the locality. Not a rare thing has it been to see half a dozen birds in the course of a walk before breakfast by the river Bure. Many were killed; one man having eleven preserved in one case. They realised from fourpence to sixpence apiece.

Sept. 17.—A passing Whimbrel answered to my call, and coming hurriedly down, alighted on the roof of a house overlooking the Bure.

1879

Feb.—During a spell of extremely severe weather a southern rush of Linnets took place. Many hundreds died, some even dropping down from the passing flocks and expiring.

1880

July 15.—Saw an exceedingly young Pochard hanging on a poulterer's stall. Its primaries were mere short soft stumps: it is certain the bird had never flown, and must have been bred on a neighbouring Broad.

1881

Sept. 23.—Quite a number of Buzzards, both Common and Rough-legged, in the neighbourhood, besides various Harriers and other birds of prey.

Sept. 23.—A Curlew was shot on Breydon with abnormally large feet, probably the result of shot wounds.

Oct. 5.—A Landrail, dropping into one of our central streets, sought refuge in a tobacconist's shop, giving some trouble in getting it out of a labyrinth of walking-sticks. Similar instances of Landrails losing themselves in the town have occurred from time to time, giving in their capture unlimited excitement.

Nov. 9.—A tired-out Jackdaw, alighting upon a chimney-pot, overbalanced itself, and tumbling down into a room, caused not a little commotion before it was secured.

1882

April.—Several wing-weary Red-legged Partridges caught in and around the town this month.

1883

Dec.—A Hooded Crow was obtained early in the month with the upper mandible describing a complete half-circle, the end of the lower one protruding three-quarters of an inch beyond it.

Dec.—A Wood-Pigeon has just died after being in a cage nineteen years. It was taken when a squab by a friend of mine. He stated that it had made off with a few bushels of corn!

1889

Sept. 4.—A number of Starlings joined in with the Swallows, on this hot day, in their aerial circlings in pursuit of insects. I have seen them do the same thing around the parish church.

Nov.—The millinery shops are exhibiting an immense number of badly stuffed Snipe as ornaments for ladies' head-gear—both Jack and Common Snipes.

Dec. 8.—A Lapwing weighing $12\frac{1}{2}$ oz. on a stall on this date.

1890

Nov. 19.—No less than eight Bearded Tits exposed for sale on a poulterer's stall. They had been killed with very large shot, and had simply been riddled to pieces! All but one were eventually thrown into the rubbish-box.

Dec. 7.—A Wigeon was picked up on the North Denes just below the telegraph wires near the railway lines. Its neck and wing were broken.

Dec. 31.—Small gulls starving, and so tame that they alighted upon the Marine Parade to pick up crumbs and biscuits thrown to them. Some boys caught several by converting a fish trunk into a trap, tilting it at one end upon a stick to which a long string had been attached. When the gulls alighted to pick up the bait the urchins pulled the string.

1891

Jan. 7.—A Rook was brought to me with a queerly formed beak, the upper mandible being but half the length of the lower one.

April 26.—After a spell of rough, adverse weather, I picked up at the high-water mark on the beach the remains of a Woodcock, a Jackdaw, a Chaffinch, a Blackbird, and a Redwing.

June 25.—Lately several adult Puffins have been washed ashore dead, probably victims of a severe northerly wind which obtained during the month. Strong tides must have drifted them from at least the Yorkshire coast.

July 9.—Saw a pair of Great Crested Grebes swimming in the sea, a most unusual thing for these birds, whose habitat is fresh water, especially in the nesting season.

Sept. 19.—A great many Terns leading southward along the shore. In the wake of the Terns this year several Skuas have been observed. One gunner killed no less than four.

1892

June 26.—A Stork coming in direct from sea settled on the roof of a house on Princes Road, and, to the astonishment of passers-by, went fast to sleep, and on awaking went away unmolested.

Oct. 8.—Continuous flocks of the Swallow family flying southwards.

Nov. 15.—A flock of Guillemots in the roads. On this date several were swimming around the end of the Britannia Pier, snatching at the baits attached to the lines of sea-anglers.

1893

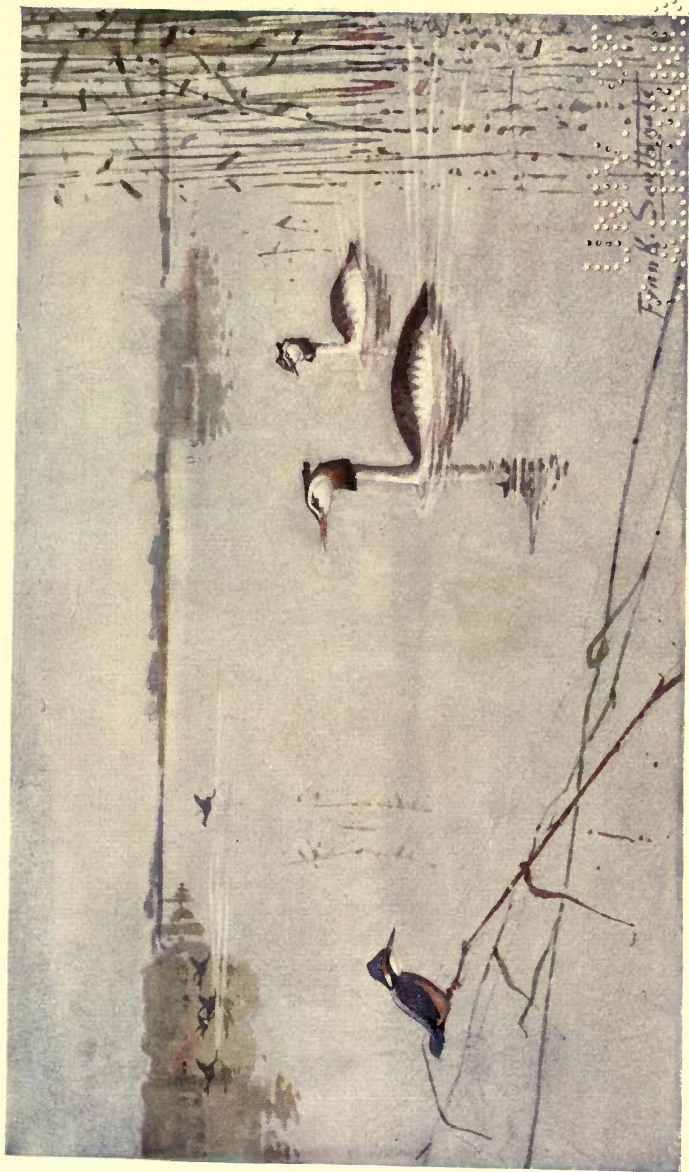
Jan. 12.—Several Waxwings seen in the neighbourhood.

Jan. 29.—Fifty-eight Wild Swans on Breydon.

Aug. 23.—Several Wood Sandpipers seen.

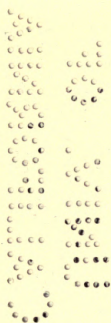
1894

June 4.—Saw a Sparrow, feeding with others, with its head a whitish grey. A day or two after



A CORNER IN BROADLAND

GREAT CRESTED GREBE, KINGFISHER, COOTS IN DISTANCE



I was shown one (alive) of a uniform cream colour, thus making—with a third I saw at Ormesby, of a buff tint—three oddly coloured examples in the space of a few days. On 10th July a live cream-coloured Blackbird was shown me.

June 7.—Two flocks of Starlings on the Breydon marshes. There were fifty in each bunch; they joined forces and wheeled in aerial evolutions, just as the larger flocks do in late autumn. Without a doubt these unpaired and unusually late flocks were the late-hatched young of a preceding autumn. Their plumage was adult.

June 26.—Obtained a live Oyster-catcher from a fishing-smack.

July 31.—An early arrival of migratory Hooded Crows. Seven appeared on the North River marshes. My earliest record of this bird's appearance is 22nd June 1896.

July 31.—A great number of some species of diptera floated along the surface of the river Bure; they had probably been blown into the water, and in long black lines were driven downstream. Some Swallows repeatedly dipped at them, hitting the water with their breasts as they seized the insects, and then, as if helped by the impetus, in curving flight rose on the wing again. Some of the birds snapped at insects that flew up from the rond, as my feet brushed the grass, and the smart "twick" of their mandibles that followed the seizure of a victim was distinctly heard over and over again.

Sept. 3.—On this date I saw a Swallow

strike at an insect floating on Ormesby Broad. As quick almost as the bird a Jack struck at the Swallow, which barely escaped the formidable jaws of the disappointed fish.

Sept. 14.—During the past fortnight about thirty Little Stints (*Tringa minuta*) have been shot on Breydon mud flats.

Sept. 21.—Saw an Alpine Accentor (*Accentor collaris*) hunting for marine insects—and I should not be surprised if crustaceans also were its prey—upon some weed-covered piles and stumps at the harbour mouth.

Oct. 10.—Two Kittiwakes, one adult and the other immature, “gilled” in a herring-net, having in their dive after herrings run their heads through the meshes of the net. I am of opinion that this dashing, strong-winged, sea-loving gull is quite capable of forcing itself beneath the surface of the water in its quest for food, although not given to diving long distances. Other gulls do not seem given to this impetuosity, and in descending to pick up a floating edible actually slacken their plunge ere they have hit the water; indeed, there seems an effort to mount before the feet are immersed.

Nov. 15.—Two-House Martins seen flying about town.

1895

Feb. 2.—A local bird stuffer had lately sixteen Little Auks in for preservation. On a

postcard from Mr. J. H. Gurney, dated 11th March, he states: "The number of Little Auks for Norfolk is 278." Verily a big catastrophe to a little species!

Nov. 2. — Observed some Snow-Buntings on the marshes, feeding upon the shrivelled-up seeds of the Michaelmas daisy (*Aster tripolium*). In hard winters, when fairly large flocks frequent the sand dunes, the hitherto buried seeds of semi-marine plants, exposed by the very forces which covered them with blown sands, afford this species, with its cousins the Shore-Larks, and the rarer Lapland Buntings, a sparse but no doubt satisfactory supply of food.

1896

April 26.—Hundreds of tired Swallows crowding on the roof of a house near the beach; they had evidently but just arrived on their northward journey.

June.—Early in the month a Crested Grebe, fishing around a boat, was caught on a hook by an angler, as much to his own surprise as the bird's.

July 14.—Saw Golden Plover on the Bure walls; my earliest autumnal record of the species.

Aug. 6.—Several Black-tailed Godwits, now rare here, on Breydon. Formerly the species nested at Horsey.

Sept. 14.—During the whole of two bleak still nights (on this date and on 13th October) the

air seemed literally alive with Grey Plovers and other migrants. Almost everyone noticed their incessant piping calls.

1897

June 26.—I observed about threescore Dunlins and a few Ringed Plovers on Breydon mud flats. Surely it were time that they had gone northward to their breeding haunts. Can it be that the Dunlins, at least, were non-breeders of that year?

Aug. 4.—Saw twelve Common Sandpipers in one flock on the Bure, the largest number I ever saw together at one time.

Dec. 4.—A Sparrow's nest with young ones at Gorleston.

1898

Jan. 17.—Young Sparrows, reared since Christmas (1897), are to be seen flying about on Trafalgar Road! Three weeks prior to this date some young Starlings were hatched at Southtown.

May 26.—Nest of Pied Wagtails in an old pail hanging on a wall at Tunstall, near Acle.

Aug. 11.—Quite a number of Crossbills invaded a Southtown garden, where, to the annoyance of the gardener, they commenced plucking his cherries and gooseberries. In "self-defence" he slew several. Of two I saw and obtained for the Tolhouse Museum one was a dirty yellowish green, the other a bright red.

Aug. 14.—Saw some Sand-Martins at Thorpe popping in and out of holes in a wall that stands up direct from the water at the riverside. They had

nests built in these cavities formed by the crumbling away of soft bricks.

Oct. 10.—There arrived on this date thousands of Gold-crested Wrens—locally termed “Herring Spinks.” In some years they are exceedingly numerous, and attract attention by the bold manner in which they settle upon shrubs and trees, and by their acrobatic feats amongst branches and twigs. At such times as St. George’s Park is lively with them, the neighbouring cats have a fine time bird-catching.

1899

May 18.—Myriads of the larvæ of the *Tipula* or Crane-fly on the grass on the Beach Gardens, which they ravaged. They might have been swept up by quarts. Yet with all the reputed love of *Passer domesticus* for this larvæ, not a Sparrow deigned to feed upon them.

May 25. — Sixteen Turnstones dodging about upon the flint stone walls of Breydon, searching for crustaceans beneath the drifted refuse. On the slightest movement of myself or boat they immediately stood motionless, when their colours so nearly assimilated to their surroundings that no one would have detected them had they not been located when on the move.

Sept. 30.—The wind set in last evening extremely rough, with rain, from the south-east, giving promise of an influx of migratorial waders. Went up Breydon to-day to see what had turned up: the

place swarmed with newly arrived Golden and Grey Plovers, Ringed Plovers, and Dunlins. Saw a few Turnstones, Greenshanks, and Whimbrel. On 2nd October, Durrant the poulterer had 33 Grey Plovers in; and altogether during the first few days in the month no less than 270 of this species.

Dec. 9.—Three dead Gannets washed up on the beach.

Dec. 21.—Ten Bernacle Geese on Breydon. During the month, while the Broads were frozen, many hundreds of Coots might be seen feeding on *Zostera marina*—the “wigeon grass”—on the flats. Their method of progress was singularly sheep-like, the whole flock moving simultaneously, every evolution one way or the other being in unison, like so many soldiers. They had become shy from incessant persecution. On rising, the patter of their feet was louder than that of gulls, and they dashed into the water with an impetuosity which flung up spray all round them.

1900

Aug. 4.—Sixteen Shovelers on Breydon. All the night I remained on Breydon in my boat; in close proximity were between 200 and 300 Terns of various species, including Black and Lesser Terns. They held a nocturnal concert.

1901

March 2.—Obtained a female Wigeon which had assumed certain markings characteristic to the male,

amongst them the bright green speculum on the wing being most noticeable.

March 23.—Wind north-east; gale diminished. Strolling by the North Beach, I was vexed at seeing the destruction of sand dune by the recent high tides. Found quite a number of dead Rooks, several Starlings, all probably northward-bound migrants, and sprinkled here and there were dead Guillemots, Little Auks, and some Puffins.

April 21.—I have at length come to a satisfactory conclusion with regard to the frequent visits of town Pigeons to Breydon mud flats: the object of their search appears to be the empty shells of the little mollusc known as *Hydrobia ulvæ*. This takes place in the finer months, the lime and saline matter combined being as healthful to the birds as necessary. I do not think that the living mollusc is overlooked.

April 27.—Twelve Spoonbills on Breydon; and five more joined them next day, remaining for some hours.

May 16.—After a little cautious manœuvring I got fairly close to a flock of ten Gadwalls (*Anas strepera*) on Breydon. It was a bitterly cold day, but the sight of these and two Spoonbills amply compensated for any discomfort. The "Spoonies" fell in with many "penny-sized" flounders, but could not swallow them. The attendant gulls did this for them, snatching them away in a very ludicrous way.

July 21.—Rowing around Breydon to-day I fell in with three Curlew-Sandpipers, two Spoonbills, a Caspian Tern, and a Sandwich Tern. The latter

was resting on a floating basket; the Caspian was fishing, plunging into the water with the dash and vigour of an Osprey.

July 25.—Observed eleven Greenshanks feeding together in one flock.

Nov.—In the middle of the month an invasion of Waxwings excited the attention of both gunners and naturalists. Reports reached me that at Filby they were to be seen “feasting in the gardens, as tame as Doves.” So they were ruthlessly killed. One shot by a bird catcher was described to me as “full up with ‘butter-haws’” (hawthorn berries).

1902

April.—Small waders on Breydon. In this month I sometimes meet with Dunlins and other small waders plumaged as grey as in the depth of winter: I feel convinced these are the late-hatched birds of the preceding year. Again, some are to be seen with the black breast-patch and summer “saddle” perfected even in March. I take it these are old and well-advanced birds.

April 15.—Met with a young fellow who has a great weakness for hunting for “Plovers’ eggs,” in which pursuit he seems only too successful. His theory for nest-finding was put as follows: The Lapwing usually makes three nest-holes; two of them he calls “scrabs.” If you find one of these scrabs,—alleged to be scratched out by the bird,—at three paces off you will find a second; and then at equal



FLOODED MARSHLAND

LAWING, SNIFE, AND IN DISTANCE LAPWINGS MOBBING HERON



paces a third, the three forming a triangle. In the northernmost hole you may "lay your life" (as he said) the Lapwing deposits its eggs. I have not experimented to prove that his ingenious bit of mathematic bird-lore has some foundation.

May 7.—Several Land-Dotterel on Caister Marshes: six in all were killed.

May 16.—Over fifty Herons scattered about Breydon, fishing.

July 3.—Two Cuckoos calling early this morning near Breydon. One piped repeatedly in its natural voice, the other answered in a key quite one note higher, calling in a double-syllabled note—*Cuck—cuck—oo!* I am satisfied there was no echo.

Oct. 3.—I obtained from the market a Teal with the breast feathers dyed by its frequently using some ditch which evidently contained colouring matter. I sent it to Mr. J. H. Gurney, who wrote: "I am much obliged for the ruddy Teal, which is the reddest I ever saw; and I will have it skinned."

1903

Jan. 1.—Weighed a Common Snipe, which balanced the scale at 6 oz.

March 3.—After a number of years' absence, six Jackdaws took up their quarters in the steeple of St. Nicholas Church. Herein they subsequently successfully reared their young.

Aug. 1.—An entirely "grey" example of the Curlew-Sandpiper, with another only tinged with

"red," feeding in front of my houseboat on this date.

Oct.—Some exceedingly large flights of Gold-crested Wrens in the neighbourhood.

Oct. 31.—A flock of Long-tailed Tits flew in, apparently from the sea, and at a very slight elevation. They came up one of the roads leading to the market-place, and thence flew towards the church, and finally disappeared.

Nov. 10.—Immense flights of Lapwings and various Plovers flying around the town abovehead at night. And on the following day thousands were seen on the marshes in the Broad districts.

Nov. 13.—Waxwings very much in evidence around Sea Palling. Four were shot on this date.

FISH NOTES

GREY MULLET

THE Grey Mullet (*Mugil capito*) claims first notice in my fish section, because my earliest recorded observation was on this species; besides this, the fish has always been a favourite with me since the day I first saw it jumping about Breydon. In the earlier half of the last century it was a common and annual visitor to Breydon, shoals coming up in the summer-time; and in the deeper water that then obtained (some of the flats being scarcely ever dry) it revelled among the vegetation growing there, the species known locally as "sea cabbage" (*Ulva lactuca*), together with the molluscs living upon it, being eaten by this fish. From the time when the "Dickey Works"—a kind of breakwater to the ebbs coming from the Waveney and Wensum (Yare)—were constructed (just prior to the 'sixties), the flats commenced to silt up, while the channel

deepened. From that time till now the Mullet has come in lessening shoals each year, until what was once a remunerative fishery, giving employment to several Breydoners, has entirely ceased. The net used was known as a "poke" or purse net, the main net consisting of small light meshes, on either side of which were larger and loose-fitting ones. When a fish pushed against the obstruction, it invariably pocketed itself, the smaller-meshed centre being driven through a large outside mesh, completely bagging the captive. Sometimes, when driven to desperation, one Mullet would jump the net, when the rest would follow: knowing this, if a large shoal was encountered, two parties would sometimes unite, a second net being drawn at a certain distance behind the other. Seldom did the Mullet jump a second time. An old Breydoner once enclosed and landed sufficient to realise £13 for his haul—a third of what the catch would have made at the present day. His largest fish weighed 9 lbs.

A few Grey Mullet, with a sprinkling of Salmon Trout and Surmullet, are taken occasionally at sea in the herring-nets. Very rarely indeed has an example taken the hook—never to my knowledge

on Breydon. One was certainly caught at the Fishwharf in August 1888. It was 22 inches in length, and took a mussel. In the old days cormorants frequented Breydon, finding the Mullet a very interesting study; since their forsaking the place, a circumstance hastened by the increasing sewage run into the river, the visits of cormorants have become fewer year by year. On 10th November 1890 a lad, fishing near Breydon, accidentally hooked a small Grey Mullet, which, on being forwarded to Dr. Günther, at the British Museum, was decided to be a variety known to science as *Mugil septentrionalis*. It was $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

BOAR-FISH

It may seem odd that a fish of great rarity should turn up in a certain locality where it has hitherto been unrecorded or unknown, and almost immediately after another, or others, be met with; but this may be accounted for by the possibility of a shoal having strayed thither. In the case of the appearance of the Boar-Fish (*Capros aper*), two or three were discovered, and then they disappeared entirely. When passing by a shrimp-er's shop on

9th July 1881 I espied a small fish the size of my hand exhibited by the side of some Shrimps. It was of a rich carmine colour, and had been taken that morning in the net. Beauty of coloration and quaintness of shape are its only recommendations to the notice of those who fall in with it. It is thinner in proportion to its size than a Dory, bony, scaly, and not sweet-smelling. My note to the *Eastern Daily Press* respecting its capture elicited from Mr. T. Southwell, F.Z.S., the following interesting letter:—

“The capture of the Boar-Fish (*Capros aper*) mentioned by Mr. A. Patterson in the letter published in your issue of this morning [11th July 1881] is very interesting, and I believe he is right in saying that this is the first record of its occurrence on the Norfolk coast. It is, however, not by any means so rare a creature as Mr. Patterson’s authorities lead him to suppose, as scarcely a year passes without its being met with on the southern coast of England, sometimes in very large numbers. The Boar-Fish was first described as British from a specimen taken in Mount’s Bay, Cornwall, in 1825, and its chief habitat seems to be close to the

'Runnel Stone,' on the west coast of Cornwall, where Couch says it may be always found in large numbers. It is probably more local than rare, and has been met with twice in Scotland, as far as the Moray Firth and Banffshire, in the Humber, and now at Yarmouth, as recorded by Mr. Patterson. But it is on the south and south-east coast where it is met with in large numbers. In July 1844 Couch says that more than two hundred were obtained on the Cornish coast; in 1843 Mr. Gatcombe saw large numbers, probably more than one thousand of them; at Plymouth they lined the shore, having been thrown overboard by the trawlers. Day (*British Fishes*) says that they have become a perfect pest of late years, compelling the trawlers to change their fishing-grounds in order to get out of their way. From the Start to the Lizard Mr. Dunn says they are very common, and seem to be on the increase. Thousands are yearly caught by the Plymouth trawlers, and thousands more by the drift fishermen. Being useless, these fish are usually thrown overboard, and thus it is probably that so many are found upon the shore dead or dying. In 1879 great numbers were found thus on the south coast. Very little is known of the

habits of the Boar-Fish, but it appears to frequent moderately deep water in close proximity to rocks, and it is worth noting that up to 1843-44, when the trawl nets seem to have first invaded their haunts, they were considered of great rarity, but from that time were taken in great numbers."

A second example 6 inches long was found on 1st May 1882.

SWORD-FISH

On 30th November 1881 a Sword-Fish (*Xiphias gladius*) was stranded at Sea Palling, a spot where several most interesting and rare fishes have obtruded themselves upon the notice of the public, amongst which may be specially mentioned the first recorded Norfolk Black-Fish (*Centrolophus pomphilus*), which was cast ashore there, still living, on 27th March 1900. The Sword-Fish in question measured 7 feet 3 inches in length; of this the sword, slightly broken at the end, was 27 inches long. There was a quantity of diluted pease-soup-like matter in the stomach. A 9-foot example managed to mix itself up in some mackerel-nets in September 1893, and was taken into Lowestoft.

LARGE MACKEREL

The local spring Mackerel fishery, which used to afford most picturesque scenes on the beach up till the 'seventies, and was carried on most profitably, is now a thing of the past; and strangely enough, the Mackerel now caught in this neighbourhood are taken simultaneously with the Herrings. The same trick that was noticeably played in the old days is seen now. Before the auctioneer commences to drag bids from intending buyers, the smallest examples are placed snugly *at the bottom* of the swill, and the largest, which have been temporarily laid aside for the purpose, are placed on the top. Some of these examples are very fine indeed. A Mackerel measured in November 1881 was 20 inches long and $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in girth, and weighed $2\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. I have found inside an average-sized Mackerel 17 sandlaunces of good size. No less than 20 lasts of Mackerel were landed at the Fishwharf on 26th September 1897; and one boat alone, on 9th October, landed two lasts, or 24,000 fish. The largest Mackerel I have ever yet seen, brought in on 21st October 1898, measured $21\frac{1}{4}$ inches; girth, 12 inches; weight, 3 lbs. 7 oz.

DISAPPEARING FISH

The reason for the lessening, and virtual disappearance, indeed, of the Grey Mullet has been given: the pollution as well as the alteration of its habitat and haunts. Why the Mackerel has altered the time of its coming is difficult to account for. The Salmon long ago disappeared from our waters, for reasons that are obvious. Sir Thomas Browne¹ observed, "Salmon no common fish in our rivers, though many are taken in the Owse." He speaks of fifteen being taken near Norwich at Christmas-time, four years before writing his book. One was found in a flooded meadow near Norwich on 1st December 1873. Rarely small examples are taken off shore. Codlings used to crowd up the Yare into Breydon up till the late 'eighties, but have since been scarce there. Large Perch, for some reason, are now seldom met with in the Broads; whether the local race has deteriorated, or large Perch are not so easily enticed to destruction as formerly, remains a matter to speculate upon.

¹ *Natural History of Norfolk*, by Sir Thomas Browne, who died in 1682.

YOUNG POLLACK

In the spring of 1888 there occurred an unprecedented invasion of juvenile Pollacks (*Gadus pollachius*) in this neighbourhood. A stir had already been made at Lowestoft in angling circles, numbers having turned up there; a fact due, it was suggested, to extensive dredging operations that had been going on there for some time. Such conjecture surely must have been wide of the mark, for no doubt tidal influences had contributed to the unusual movement of this species. At that period I was keen on hunting up new species for my list, and hearing of the big captures, went fishing myself, baiting my hooks with live sand-shrimps. On 8th May I caught in a short time no less than seventeen, averaging 11 inches apiece. I knew the fish at once as what was locally termed the "Pinnikin Cole." "Pinnikin" I take to be suggestive of small size. Still further examining my capture, and consulting Couch (*British Fishes*), I satisfactorily identified it as the Pollack. Year by year we have a few captured here, but never so numerous as in 1888.

EAST COAST GOBIES

Since 1888 the list of Gobies, before then standing at only one solitary species—the Spotted Goby (*Gobius minutus*)—Paget's,¹ I have had the satisfaction of bringing up to five: the Yellow-spotted Goby (*Gobius auratus*) in 1888, Rock Goby (*G. niger*) in 1889, White Goby (*Latrunculus pellucidus*) in 1890, and the Two-spotted Goby (*Gobius ruthensparri*) in 1891. The first Yellow-spotted Goby I ever recognised I pulled out of the mouth of a Whiting, its tail only protruding. Great numbers are taken every year in the shrimpers' nets. It is a marine species. The Spotted Goby is equally at home in brackish and even fresh water. I have seen it at the Burgh end of Breydon, scuttling about in little pools left in the ronds. It has an odd habit of stirring up the soft mud around it into quite a smoky sort of cloud, when it either hides there until danger is past, or, in the confusion caused to any interfering enemy, manages to bolt to some other location. My experience with the White Goby was interesting. A shrimp lad had saved a specimen for

¹ *Sketch of the Natural History of Yarmouth*, by C. J. and J. Paget, 1834.

me, which he thought was a curious Smelt. Its comparatively enormous teeth gave it the appearance of a dwarfed Wolf-Fish. A certain premium having been placed upon each one he could bring me, the boy set diligently to hunt for others, and with such success that I soon had brought to me many more than I needed, and certainly more than I felt disposed to pay for. So the contract had to be abandoned. I sent a couple to the British Museum, when Dr. Günther satisfied me with regard to my finding of the species. Since that year I have seen scarcely any examples. To the shrimpers I owe my first sight of a Rock Goby, several of which have from time to time been preserved for me.

MÜLLER'S SCOPELUS

My most interesting find I always consider to be the Müller's Scopelus (*Scopelus pennantii*), the circumstances under which I found it, and its extreme rarity, combining to make its discovery quite an event in my early rambling days. I took it suddenly into my head to walk to Gorleston pierhead on a Sunday afternoon in April 1889. On the way I was delayed half an hour in the market-

place, and then pursued my walk. It so happened that a few minutes before my reaching the extreme point of the beach, a couple of fishermen had made one haul of a "draw-net," but finding little for their pains, had left the beach, and rowed back to Gorleston. The incoming tide was already flinging the spray of the waves over a heap of refuse shaken from the net. Seeing a small Herring or two kicking about on the weed, I overhauled it with my stick, finding, still struggling and strong alive, several young Herrings of from 2 to 4 inches in length, three or four Viviparous Blennies (*Zoarces viviparus*), three Three-spined Sticklebacks, and some tiny Plaice. Suddenly a small, herring-like fish, with some emerald spots along its abdomen, caught my eye, and I just contrived to save it from being washed away. Placing it in a handful of seaweed, I tied it in the corner of my handkerchief, eventually sending it to Norwich to Mr. Southwell, who satisfactorily identified it. The fish was $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch long and $\frac{3}{8}$ ths of an inch deep. Its chocolate-coloured back and extremely elongated lower jaw made a conspicuous contrast when laid beside a Herring its own size. Mr. Southwell wrote—

"It was about two inches long, and had evidently been very beautiful, but was in so dilapidated a condition that I sent it to Mr. Day of Cheltenham,¹ in order that my determination of the species might be placed beyond doubt, and he was good enough to confirm my conclusions. The little creature has so many names that I hardly know which to distinguish it by. Pennant was the first to describe it, and called it the 'Sheppey Argentine,' a very misleading name, as it is not an Argentine at all. Yarrell called it 'Pearl-Sides,' a very appropriate and descriptive name. The American Fisheries Commission give it a better name still, 'Müller's Scopelus.' It has a very wide distribution, as may be imagined when I say that the only other specimen I ever saw was given me by a whaling captain, who caught it in lat. 73°12' north, long. 14°28' west, a long way north-west of Jan Meyer, and that it, or a specimen very like it, has also been taken in the Mediterranean. In the British Isles it has been taken chiefly in the north of Scotland, but also off the coasts of Devonshire, Flintshire, and Killiney Bay, near Dublin. In life the little fellow is very beautiful, the scales large and lustrous, very easily

¹ Author of *British Fishes*.

detached, and of a beautiful silvery sheen. The back is glossy black, or nearly so; the under parts also darker, but relieved by a number of remarkable luminous spots, largest under the thorax, forming a double line as far as the vent, and thence to the tail fin single; but the various figures show considerable departures from this arrangement. A full description of the Arctic specimen before referred to was sent by Mr. Day to *Nature* for the 14th of October 1886, to which I must refer you for a more particular account; but Norfolk naturalists are much indebted to Mr. Patterson for so interesting an addition to the marine fauna of the county."

Three others were found by a friend of mine on the north beach on 24th February 1890. Day's remark, that "they are generally found thrown on the shore after bad weather," is confirmed in this instance by the fact that just before a stiff gale had raged along the coast. Mr. Southwell, to whom they were submitted for examination, replied, "Your young friend's fishes are certainly the rare *Scopelus*. It, like many other inconspicuous things, probably is not so rare as is generally supposed; it wants finding, and it is not everybody who would care for such a small beast when found. They are in wretched

condition, rubbed, and not a scale remaining." My last record of the species is one found on the north beach near Scrabby in March 1893.

FOUR-BEARDED ROCKLING

Another rarity, the Four-bearded Rockling (*Motella cimbria*), fell into my hands by the merest accident. Early on the morning of 23rd May 1889 I rambled beachwards before the sun had risen: the sea margin was scarcely visible. On reaching the beach I hesitated for a moment, and mentally "tossed up," so to speak, *Right angle or half a right angle?* and at once directed my course at the latter angle, reaching the water's edge obliquely. I stumbled on a heap of seaweeds that had been left by the draw-netters an hour or so before, and commenced raking it over with my walking-stick, bringing to view a ling-like fish, which I afterwards found to measure $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches long. As soon as I could see distinctly I began a closer examination, and at once, by its appearance and its unmistakable cirrhi, found it to be a Four-bearded Rockling. Afterwards consulting Couch, I found it was no stranger to Norwegian waters, and had been discovered in

several stations in Scotland, and also at Falmouth. Day, referring to its being found in Cornwall, says it is "small and rare."

I forwarded a drawing and description to Mr. Southwell, who replied: "Many thanks for your letter and the drawing of the Four-bearded Rockling, which, so far as I know, has not been before recorded as occurring in Norfolk. You are very fortunate in coming across such good things, and it only shows what may be done by a person even of limited time if he keeps his eyes open." The fish had been crushed by a fisherman's heel, and so made a bad specimen. I found one large Shrimp in the maw.

DOUBLE TURBOTS

In October 1889 I discovered my first Double Turbot. The following paragraph is taken from a report of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society's meeting:—

"Mr. Southwell exhibited a drawing of what is known as a 'Double Turbot,' sent by Mr. Patterson of Yarmouth. An ordinary Turbot, at an early age, is transformed from a fish swimming in the usual way, with its broad sides vertical, to one

which swims horizontally, both eyes being on the upper surface, which is coloured, the under surface being white and eyeless. In the Double Turbot this change has been arrested, and both sides have remained coloured and covered with the spines usually found on the upper surface only, the eyes remaining almost in the normal position which they occupy in a fish swimming, say, as a Bream, not both on one side, as in the Sole. Such double flat fish, though now and then met with, are decidedly rare. They are known to swim vertically, and near the surface, unlike other flat fishes, which keep to the bottom."

The Turbot referred to had a queer kind of notch just "above" the head, and in this the so-called travelling eye had remained, thus giving its owner, when swimming "edgeways up," an opportunity to see on either side of him.

I have on several occasions since seen Double Turbots, slightly varying in individuals; in one or two the notch above the head was wanting, and the "travelling" eye was somewhat nearer to the other. In two instances the fish have been quite dark-coloured on both sides except the head, which remained white. It is interesting to note that in

examples only blotched on the under side the spines corresponding with those on the upper surface are entirely wanting on the white patches. In the case of a fish possessing a white patch above—an exceedingly rare circumstance—the spines there too are wanting.

Two fine examples brought in in November 1896 weighed respectively, when gutted, 11 lbs. and 12 lbs.

PREGNANT BLENNY

Attached to a string of Herrings' heads on a rubbish box I found, on November 1889, a full-grown female Viviparous Blenny (*Zoarces viviparus*). Noticing its undue plumpness, I took it in my hand, when some young ones, fully developed, and quite ready for extrusion, slid down the body of the fish as I held it vertically. I afterwards counted 133 little ones, each measuring $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch. In a straight line they covered just $5\frac{1}{2}$ yards.

WASHED OUT TO SEA

After heavy rains, when the marsh ditches contain more water than is considered safe or requisite by

the marshman, the pump mills are set to work, and the big wheels or the turbines throw thousands of gallons per hour into the sluices connected with the river. Here and there, when the tide is low, sluice-gates at the wall-side are opened, and much water let off in this way. In the strong current made by the falling water are borne many Three-spined Sticklebacks, which, still descending on the almost fresh-water ebb, eventually find themselves outside the harbour mouth. These hardy little fellows take a bit of killing, being in some instances "acclimatised" to brackish water. It is no rare thing to find them in summer kicking about with juvenile Herrings in the refuse left on the beach by the draw-netters.

In 1887 a Carp, $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, that had by some means been drawn into the river, was hauled ashore in a draw-net in company with some of his marine relatives. Small Perch, it is well known, hang around where the freshets mix with the salt water coming upstream; and occasionally they come a bit too far. In 1889 a shrimper brought me one he had taken alive in his net amongst the Shrimps and Blennies. On two or three occasions I have known Carp to be picked up on Breydon, feebly

objecting to the saline nature of the water, which would eventually have killed them.

That Sticklebacks will recover after being in the sea is certain, for on 6th April 1890 I picked up several, and packing them between some red seaweed in a tin box, I carried them home. One I placed in a large pickle bottle filled with tap water (from Ormesby Broad), wherein he immediately commenced bullying some Ten-spined Sticklebacks that had been living there a long time. He was so vicious that I had to remove him to a bottle by himself.

Whether it were possible for a Pike to live any length of time in quite salt water is, to my mind, very doubtful. "Salts" invading the upper reaches of our rivers are occasionally fatal to great numbers of fresh-water fishes, Pike included. In the autumn of 1895 hundredweights of fish, including many small Pike, perished above Acle, and were fished out for manure. But in November 1897 a Pike of goodly size was taken in a herring-net miles out at sea, off Yarmouth. It was *reported* to be "strong alive" when captured: that it was netted I am satisfied, for it was taken to a taxidermist for preservation as a novelty.

DEFORMED CODFISHES

Deformities in fishes are not of common occurrence, although in the case of the Cod I cannot describe them as extremely rare. Having noted down such as have come under my notice, I give the records as they occur:—

Jan. 1, 1890.—Saw a Cod measuring in length $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and 19 inches in girth at thickest part; weighing $11\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. At about 10 inches from the tail the depth was $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches; that of normal examples, several of which I measured, at that particular part, was $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The fins *were unusually thick* at their bases.

Jan. 20, 1890.—Examined a Cod so humped at the centre of the back that it looked as if it had been bent to half a right angle. It was in good condition.

May 1, 1894.—Met with a most extraordinary-looking Codfish, measuring about 16 inches in length. The upper and fore part of the head was raised and rounded in a very odd fashion, bulging out like an abnormal forehead, the snout being pointed and shortened, the lower jaw protruding at least 2 inches beyond it. The eyes, instead of being rounded, were upright ovals. [I have seen other “bull-dog” varieties of the Cod since, but never a more grotesque example.]

An exceedingly odd example was taken in January 1899. It measured 13 inches in length. Not only did the upper jaw protrude somewhat beyond the average, and was, moreover, singularly pointed, but the under jaw receded, leaving a space, when closed, equal to half a walnut in the mouth. To counteract this deformity, the tongue was rounded and enlarged to the size of a marble, which effectually blocked the gullet when necessary. Laid upon its back, the fish was curiously shark-like about the mouth. It was figured in the *Morning Leader* of 24th January.

A Codling brought to me in October 1903, stunted and thick-set, deserves mention. Stunted Cods are on dissection generally found to have the anterior portion of the vertebra closely coalesced, but in this instance the malformation was so striking at both ends of it that it had very much the appearance of a Roach or Bream. The vertebræ on examination proved to have had this process well defined at each end of it. The fish was only one foot in length; of this, the head, to the edge of the gill-covers, occupied fully one-third.

INTERESTING FINDS

I know of no spot so interesting to the naturalist as the tide-mark at the seaside. Just where the highest billow reached will often be found deposited a great variety of nature's trifles, seaweed usually predominating. There are times, of course, when the tide-mark is barren—so much so, indeed, that it is difficult to locate it. At others every step brings the Rambler to some or several objects of interest. Westerly winds in summer are responsible for the “drawing up” of much seaweed of the finer kinds; an easterly and northerly gale flings ashore the brown weeds—the tangle, *fuci*, and the ribbon-weed. Various mollusca and crustacea come ashore with the east winds; a southerly wind brings nothing. In the finer days, when the draw-netters are at work, the probabilities of finding higher forms of life are greater. The following “notes,” taken *verbatim* from my diary, may be worthy of perusal:—

April 6, 1900.—Strolled this afternoon to the harbour mouth. Two lots of draw-netters at work, in quest of Smelts, of which thirty were taken in one haul. Other fishes were a Salmon-Trout, plenty of Pogges, small Herrings, Flounders,

and Whittings; also a Butterfish, three Sprats, and several large Viviparous Blennies and Sticklebacks. I also noticed one small Pollack, and, what most delighted me, a Power Cod (*Gadus minutus*) $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length. This is the first recorded example for Norfolk. [I have seen several others since.] The lengths of the various species were: Whittings, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches; Pollack, 11 inches; Blennies, 11 inches; Sprat, 3 inches; Smelts from 4 inches to $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

April 12.—Early morning. Found a fish new to my list this morning, namely, the Ocean Pipefish (*Nerophis æquoreus*). Length, 15 inches. The species has been recorded for the Wash, but is new to Yarmouth. [Have found several others since.] May easily be recognised, being as round and smooth as a pencil.

April 13.—Great numbers of Sea Mice washed ashore. Codfish are peculiarly partial to them. Many empty skate-barrows. A number of small Herrings were washing ashore running from 3 inches up to $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Noticing a $6\frac{1}{4}$ -inch example to be very full, I took it home, and with the aid of a lens counted no less than 143 Opossum Shrimps from its maw, the largest being $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of an inch long and $\frac{1}{16}$ th inch in diameter. I found no food in any of the others.

When overhauling a trunk of sea-fish in October 1891 I found a 14-inch Brill, whose dorsal and anal fins ran continuously *under* the tail, forming

a complete half-circle, the tail lapping over and extending beyond it, and could be lifted clear away from it.

Early in October 1891 an Angler, or Fishing Frog (*Lophius piscatorius*), 12 inches in length, was taken out of the "pocket" of a relative exactly $2\frac{1}{2}$ times its own length. The largest Angler I ever saw was unceremoniously wheeled to my office in June 1897; it weighed quite a hundred-weight! I advised the men who brought it to exhibit it around town, and invest their takings in a better concern than the public-house. A very curious Plaice came to hand in April 1898: it measured 11 inches. Across the under side, quite in the centre of its length and at right angles to the surrounding fins, ran a supplementary fin. There were three fin rays towards either margin, each connected by membrane; the rayless centre-third being also connected by the web. The fin was quite free to work, but must have been a greater nuisance than help in its possessor's peregrinations.

Hardly so handicapped was a Spotted Skate (*Raia maculata*), about the size of an ordinary dinner-plate, that had an extra fin, the size of a

business envelope, in the centre of its upper side, and at right angles to it. It was perfectly rayed, but had a tendency to fall to one side, and thus conveniently to get out of the way of obstacles during the progress of its wearer.

A stunted Herring was brought to the Fishwharf in February 1899. Its length was $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches and the depth 2 inches. For this depth it should at least have been 10 inches long, the normal length of a 'longshore Herring. It was plump, and contained a well-developed roe.

MÜLLER'S TOP-KNOT

The average shrimper will not trouble himself much with regard to what he designates "curios." Every shrimper has some yarn or other to tell about taking a fish he "never saw the likes of afore," but with this, and a vague, useless, and mostly misleading description, the matter usually ends, unless he reproachfully adds that "I laid it aside for you, but you didn't come, so I hulled it overboard." And it is almost useless to try and persuade a shrimper to preserve for inspection any curious species unless he thinks he can get a price

for it altogether beyond its value. Strictly speaking, a rare fish is valueless, and will remain so until stuffed fishes are as attractive to the public as stuffed birds.

On 11th June 1890 I saw a shrimper mending his net by the side of the Bure. My query as to whether anything curious had been got of late elicited the fact that a "pal" had, that very morning, shown him a "rummy" flat fish, and had probably taken it home. I hunted up the catcher, who said he had "chucked it into the back yard," whither, at my request, he went, and fortunately found the fish intact, having as by a miracle escaped the prowling cats that look after the refuse fish of their shrimper neighbour. On sight I saw it was Müller's Top Knot (*Zeugopterus punelatus*). It measured $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length; width, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches; and $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of an inch in thickness. It being the first for the county, and in remarkably good condition, I despatched it to Norwich Museum, where it is now. I have seen three or four others since.

ECKSTROM'S TOP-KNOT

Far more fortunate was I in the case of the first and, so far, only known appearance on the

Norfolk coast of the rare Eckstrom's Top-Knot (*Zeugopterus unimaculatus*). This fish was taken in April 1902 by a friendly shrimper living some distance from my home, who, having run a bit of cotton through its mouth, hung it over his mantel-piece, where it remained for a number of weeks, waiting for me. Happening to pass his house in September, when on my way to a deceased friend's funeral, he called me in, and graciously handed it me. It was 6 inches long, and as dry as a chip; but on being forwarded to Mr. Boulanger, my finding was immediately confirmed.

CALLED AS UMPIRE

On 13th June 1900 I had just comfortably settled in bed, and the clock had struck twelve, when suddenly a cart drove up to the front door, and a rousing knock called me from the land of dreams. Slipping downstairs hardly dressed, I opened the door, when three big fellows—one a farmer, the others connected with the fishing business—stumped in and laid a large fish on the table. They said they had come to me for an identification of the fish. Could I tell them?

Was it a Rock Salmon? What was it? The fishermen didn't know. I informed them it was a full-grown Pollack; it weighed 20 lbs. and was 3 feet long.

"There you are!" said one fellow to the others. "I've won the bet. I said it *wasn't* a Rock Salmon." Noisily thanking me, they bundled out, and went away. How much money changed hands I do not know; they were all sporting men—of a sort. And I had unwittingly been party to a bet!

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

I went on board a fishing smack in June 1890, and in a large tub found twenty-two little Monk-Fish (*Squatina vulgaris*) swimming about contentedly enough in translucent water taken out at sea. The mother of this large family had been captured off the Dogger Bank, and when shot on to the deck gave birth to them, the interested fishermen transferring them immediately to this improvised aquarium. The adult fish, which died soon after, was 49 inches in length. She was of a light sandy hue, the little ones being a grey colour spotted minutely with white and brown. Two

that I purchased are now in Norwich Museum; they are 11 inches in length.

On a warm sunny afternoon in July 1900 the river was alive with "Whitebait" (immature Herrings), which flashed about like a myriad living strips of burnished silver. The Eels in the river were hungry, and many, to the surprise of those who witnessed it, left their muddy haunts below and came to the surface, dashing hither and thither after the savoury little morsels!

In October 1890 a 6-inch Smelt, either to escape some pursuer, or because "stung" by sewage, flung itself quite out of the water and landed in the well of my punt, where it remained until I could attend to it.

An extraordinary invasion of Codlings took place in October 1890, when day after day thousands came up the Yare and swarmed in Breydon. They were ravenously on feed, and afforded some marvellous sport, every available boat being requisitioned. They bit at anything, and did not usually wait for the bait to sink beneath the surface. Two and three at a time would immolate themselves; and folks staggered home under loads they did not seem to know what to

do with. I was out of work at the time, and kept my small family well supplied—wearied them, in fact—with fish.

On a frosty January morning in 1891 I pulled up a lump of ice to which some ditch weeds adhered. To my surprise, I saw a colony of Three-spined Sticklebacks, seemingly as much taken aback as I was. I am inclined to think that this species in intensely cold weather becomes semi-dormant, but whether, when the whole body of water becomes frozen throughout, the hardy little fellow gets mixed up in the nip, and thaws into life again when the ice melts, I cannot say. It would be interesting to settle this matter.

April 1891 was a busy month for those in the fish line. The shrimp lads were eagerly looking out for curious specimens, and amongst a considerable amount of useless and common species I received the following:—

April 6.—*Bubalis* (*Cottus bubalis*). A beautiful living example brought me in a pickle bottle. In this condition I was desirous of sending it to Norwich. Accordingly, attaching a bit of rag to the top and a label to the neck, I hurried with it to the railway station. The clerk was sorely puzzled as to the way the “parcel” should be

entered—fish, animal, or what? At length he described it as “glass—with care”; and under that heading it went. This fish was the first of the species recorded for Yarmouth.

April 11.—Almost as rare here was a pretty little example of the Lesser Forkbeard (*Raniceps trifurcus*) brought me. Length, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

April 13.—Stepping on board a shrimp boat to see a “curio” preserved for me, I was delighted to find it a Two-spotted Goby (*Gobius ruthensparri*), new to my list, and probably the second of its species for the county. Curiously enough, two others were brought me before the 18th.

Some years ago there lived in the town a coal-hawker, who was considered to be a little bit odd—in fact, had, as they termed it, a screw loose somewhere. He did not always act wisely, as was shown one day when, in a ramble along the beach, he saw a large Conger lying on a sandbank, apparently dead. I am not so sure as to the time of the year, but it is not rare in very severe weather for Congers to wash ashore dead or helpless, their bladders having been so distended by the action of the frost that it is impossible for them to control its functions, when, tossed about by the keen easterly winds and boisterous waves, they at length are cast upon the sands. Our friend, espying the fish, between which and

himself was an extensive and deep pool or "dock," immediately pulled off his clothes, and, fastening a long garter to his neck, swam over. It was the matter of a few minutes for him to attach the loose end of the garter to the tail of the fish, and then with a quick movement to throw it with himself into the water and attempt to recross the "dock." The moment the fish felt himself in his native element again he began to struggle, and with returning strength he soon became master of the situation, pulling the poor fellow helplessly here and there, and under, and almost drowning him. His yells, however, brought assistance, when, spluttering and protesting, he and his captive were landed in safety.

A 20-inch Eel made a great mistake respecting its swallowing capacities. In September 1898 it was found dead upon the surface of a Broad, choked by a Water Vole it had attempted to devour.

Accepting the theory that the Double Turbot swims edgeways up, one would naturally expect any other double flat fish to do the same; but the fact of my "spearing" with a "butt pick" a Double Flounder in May 1900 makes "the exception" which they say "proves the rule." This, the only

"double" Flounder I ever saw, was fairly struck by the pick-tine through the centre of it. The notch and the stationary eye were marked characteristics of this example.

Stopping a fish-hawker in the street in the spring of 1901 I examined the contents of his barrow. Noticing the tail of a fish protruding from the mouth of another, I pulled it out, and to my surprise discovered it was a Whiting $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches long: its devourer, also a Whiting, was but $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches long!

In June 1901 a passer-by noticed some strange fish floundering about near the quayside piles. Reaching down one of the life-poles kept by the riverside, he succeeded in gaffing a very fair-sized Angler Fish, 2 feet in length.

Some years ago old Jack Gibbs, a noted Breydoner, when picking for Eels struck a Conger. The lively creature, which weighed $13\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., gave him a scare, and afterwards some warm work before he managed to get it into his boat.

A 26-lbs. Conger, also forgetting itself so far as to visit Breydon, was enclosed in a smelt net, and afforded two men half an hour's lively diversion before being finally settled.

SOME SOLE NOTES

I saw an 11-inch Sole in August 1890 that was minus the caudal fin; where the tail should be was a decidedly V-shaped inlet, the dorsal and anal fins rounding off and meeting like two sections of a scalloped curtain.

Only once did I meet with a left-handed Sole, *i.e.* a Sole with the mouth opening towards the dorsal fin instead of the anal fin. This variation is, I believe, extremely rare.

A queerly shaped Sole attracted my attention on 29th October 1891. It was curiously shortened, and slightly wider than a Sole of normal shape its own length. What was most curious about it was the peculiarly rounded posterior end; the dorsal and anal fins coming round in two curves joined the base of the tail.

In February 1895 a singularly stunted Sole was brought in; it measured $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, for a width across of $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches. It was nearly a third less than the normal length.

Another stunted individual came to hand in January 1898. Its length was $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width, 6 inches.

On 19th September 1899 a 10-inch Sole was exposed for sale in the town. The upper surface of it, save what might be roughly termed the "cheek" of the fish, was perfectly white even to the extremities of the fins.

THROWN UP BY THE SEA

One of the most beautiful and rare of British fishes is the Kingfish or Opah (*Zeus luna*). Its colours are resplendent although its shape is not comely, it being an exceedingly clumsily built creature. I was passing along the street on 18th October 1891 when I saw a group of persons examining some object on a countryman's cart. Joining them, I found a splendid example of this fish that had been toppled ashore the day before after a heavy gale. Its length was 38 inches, girth 41 inches, and its weight 51 lbs. The rich colours of blue, vermilion, and green, spotted with white, made it a creature of conspicuous beauty, which the scimitar-shaped dorsal and ventral fins and the forked tail of richest crimson tended to intensify. It had evidently found itself astray amongst the sandbanks and there got knocked about until exhausted, when it was finally washed ashore at Caister.

It was a "toss-up" with the coastguardsman who saw it come ashore whether he should throw it on a manure heap, but being overruled by the advice of his friends, he drove it to the Fishwharf, where, after a brisk competition, it was knocked down to a local fish merchant for £2, and was preserved for him. Two or three others only are recorded for this locality, each of them found on the beach after severe gales.

There were three small Herrings washed up at the tide-mark on 2nd April 1892 respectively measuring 3 inches, 5 inches, and 7 inches in length. I was interested in the appearance of the second fish, and, to my surprise, found a fairly well-developed roe within it.

In October 1894 some blasting operations took place on a submerged wreck. The explosions killed several fishes, which floated ashore. The best find I made was a 28 lbs. Cod, and, having no other means of carrying it, I strung it on the barrel of my gun by running it under the gill-cover and out at the mouth, and so managed to carry home a very interesting capture.

VARIATIONS IN COLOUR

In November 1890 a Plaice lying on a fish slab caught my attention. It is a common practice for fish-mongers to lay Plaice out for sale the under side up, just as they lay Soles in pairs, and Smeared Dabs the right side up. The Plaice in question had a patch of greenish brown—the colour of the upper surface—on the tail-end, reaching upwards one-fourth of the length of the fish. There were two separate spots of this colour, and wherever this discoloration obtained, spots exactly corresponding with those on the upper surface were present. This is invariably the case in Plaice so marked, wherever the blotchings may be. This applies even to the fins. I have observed that in under-coloured examples that are lighter tinted, such as dirty cream or light grey, they are minus the spots.

An Albino Brill.—In February 1892 I obtained a perfectly albino variety of the common Brill (*Rhombus lævis*). The upper surface was entirely white, like the under side, with the exception of the extreme edges of the surrounding fins, which merged into a yellowish grey. When fresh, the fish had a pretty appearance, the thin, smooth, polished upper

surface looking almost like porcelain, whilst at the base of the fins a metallic pink was observable in certain lights. Around the eyes were irregular rings of an orange tint, giving the fish a red-eyed look; the irides of the eyes were of the normal colour. The fish measured 15 inches in length.

An Albino Turbot.—I purchased and forwarded to the British Museum, on 1st March 1894, a 14-inch white Turbot. The only attempt at coloration was a narrow rim of grey around the eyes and a slight tint here and there on the fins. The whole upper surface was smooth, and altogether bare of the spiny processes so conspicuously adorning the fish of normal coloration. Another 15-inch example of pure white Turbot occurred on 25th May 1897.

An Albino Eel.—A 15-inch sharp-nosed eel of a cream-white colour was taken in the Bure early in June 1895. It was as thick as one's thumb. There was a very small patch of the normal colour in the centre of the top of the head; the lips were pink, and a faint tinge of pink was observable upon the dorsal and anal fins.

A 15-inch Mackerel, landed on the Fishwharf 15th July 1897, had its deep blue back entirely whole coloured, the absence of stripes giving it a most

curious appearance. I obtained one almost as large in July 1901.

Several Plaice averaging 20 inches in length, taken in November 1897, and probably all captured in the same locality, were distinguished by large irregular white patches on the upper surface, the red spots being wanting wherever the normal colour was absent.

A Smeared Dab, 10 inches long, which I saw on 20th October 1902, whilst being of the normal colour, had the whole of the fins encircling it entirely white. A singularly pretty Plaice was brought in in February 1902. The fore half of the upper surface was of the usual colour, and spotted red. The posterior portion was white, with here and there the slightest tinge of brown in spots; singularly enough, wherever a dash of brown appeared a red spot centred it. The fins were reddish in hue, and the tail decidedly yellow, with red lines marking the rays.

The most beautifully coloured flat fish I have yet met with was obtained on 13th October 1902. It was a 10-inch Smeared Dab (*Pleuronectes microcephalus*). The posterior half was of the normal grey-brown colour, but the ground colour

of the anterior portion was white, blotched here and there with large spots of vermilion, amid a sprinkling of small brown dots. Around the eyes were rings of red. The right pectoral fin was white, the ventrals also; while the dorsal and anal fins for half their length were a pinkish white, the remaining portions being brown.

A Thornback Ray with the upper surface perfectly white was taken in a shrimp-net off shore in August 1903. It equalled in size a dinner plate.

SOME EEL NOTES

Our local eel-catchers, who, in the course of a year, secure many tons of eels, have some very crude ideas respecting its species, its movements, and its reproduction. Several fancy distinctions are given to the two kinds known here, the Broad-nosed and the Sharp-nosed Eel, the latter being known as the Silver-bellied; this is by far the most numerous taken. The eel-catchers talk of "glotts" and "brotts," and other varieties, that after all only differ in coloration, due undoubtedly to habitat, environment, food, or other local cause. With regard to the Eel's reproduction, they assert seriously

that it produces its young alive, backing up their statement by telling you that they often turn out the young when skinning them; and nothing in the world will convince them that they are parasitic worms. As to eel's spawning, they will not believe it.

In May 1892 I was exhibiting a stuffed Lesser Rorqual Whale in Norwich, and happening to pass a fishmonger's, I saw him about to skin some large eels. They had been taken a few miles out of the city, and still retained the snoods and the hooks in their mouths and gullets. I offered the man some coppers if he would save for me the entrails, which he did. Amongst those of one fine example I detected what I considered to be a lobe of ova; and on abrading it, and placing the jagged pieces under a lens, it was easy enough to distinguish the globules of spawn. I forwarded it to Mr. Southwell, who placed some of it in spirit, and concurred in my opinion. There, distinctly enough, were the fragments of ova, looking like so many minute bunches of yellowish grapes.

That the Eel develops cannibalistic traits is evidenced by the fact of an Eel, weighing $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and measuring about 18 inches in length, on being opened disclosing two smaller brethren, each as

thick as one's little finger. Six small Shorecrabs, included, had made a fairly good meal for the gluttonous fellow.

How far wrong my conclusions may be I know not, but I sincerely believe, although I have failed as yet to convince any of my naturalist friends, that many Eels come up from the sea in spring. In May it is a constant practice with eel-babbers to drop downstream at eventide, when the ebb serves, and to fish at the bottom of it, and until near high water, within a very short distance of the harbour mouth. I have fished there myself, and as soon as the tide began to make up have captured freely goodly-sized Eels. It is well known that in late autumn thousands upon thousands go down to the sea. That these all perish, as some would have us believe, I think highly improbable. All that go down are by no means full grown or gravid. And whence come those eels which in spring and summer swarm the coast? Surely, as likely from the depths of the ocean as down the river! And by the same manner of deduction, are they not as likely to ascend the rivers as Smelts, or Lamperns, or any other species?

AMERICAN ROSE PERCH

On 29th April 1894 a small but most beautifully coloured American Rose Perch (*Scorpaena dactyloptera*) was taken in a shrimp-net, and brought to me by "Pintail" Thomas, a worn-out Breydon punt gunner. Its length was $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Forwarding it to Mr. Southwell, I received from him the following interesting letter:—

"I duly received [*Scorpaena*], and a very interesting little chap it is. I will take it down to the museum. . . . Day states generally that the species is an inhabitant of the Northern Ocean, uncommon in Greenland, occurs on the south-west coast of Spitzbergen, frequently captured by the cod-fishers of the Faroe Islands, not uncommon off Norway, and extends as far south along the American coast as New York. As a British fish it appears to have been first recorded by Pennant; has been met with several times in Scotland, and in January 1867 near Hartlepool; also in 1851 in Swansea Bay; it has also occurred several times in Ireland. Day states that its food consists of crustacea and small flat fishes, and that it is usually captured at profound

depths, 'and is believed usually to reside there, especially in rocky bays where the distance to the bottom is very great.' The young are said to be born alive, and to accompany their parents for a considerable time. It attains to a length of four feet. This capture is just in time to add to the list which we have for the forthcoming part of the *Naturalists' Society's Transactions*."

I might add that above was the first recorded for Norfolk. Strange to say, I met with this species again under most curious circumstances, to be narrated hereafter.

UP FROM THE SEA

Just as fresh-water fishes occasionally make for the sea unintentionally, so sea fishes occasionally find themselves in waters equally foreign to them. Herring "Syle"—immature Herrings—come up the river in summer by myriads; many never return, for they are stranded on the flats, snapped up by Flounders, Gulls, and other enemies, and often pulled ashore in the small nets. From a net on 2nd September 1894 I fished out a Herring about

8 inches in length. It had a peculiarly rounded tail, the lobes of the fin being curved instead of strait and V-shapen. I put it in a pail of water, and for an hour or so amused myself at its expense, and finally turned it adrift again, apparently none the worse for my attentions or its imprisonment.

It was reported in the *Eastern Daily Press* that a Plaice 20 inches in length was hooked near Potter Heigham, fifteen miles up the Bure, and in the heart of the Broadlands. I should incline to suspect it was a Flounder, a species now and again captured in fresh waters.

In July 1903, whilst fishing at Wroxham Broad, an angler landed what he described in the same newspaper as "a sea flat fish of the Plaice species," in all probability a Flounder. I myself, while fishing at Reedham, fully twelve miles from Yarmouth, have taken the Shorecrab (*Carcinus mænas*).

A small Shark—a Tope—(*Galeus vulgaris*), between 5 and 6 feet in length, altogether lost its bearings in September 1903, and coming three miles up-river, found itself in Breydon. Either the sewage discomfited him, or his more restricted swim hampered his movements; anyway, it was soon

observed that the fish was by no means at home. Coming repeatedly to the surface, it was soon espied by a wherryman, who pushed off in a boat, armed only with a boat-hook, in pursuit of it. After a good deal of racing and dodging to and fro, the man succeeded in fixing the hooked end of the pole in the Shark's mouth. This it actively resented; but it was not long before its struggles grew less violent, when by an adroit jerk it was flung into the boat, where it capered and snapped in a further series of futile protestations. It is probable that the fish had come into the neighbourhood in pursuit of the Herring shoals. On the fish I found several rather pretty specimens of fish lice answering to the description of *Pandarus bi-color*.

ON THE PROWL

It is a very common occurrence in summer to see Flounders harrying Shrimps at the margins of the mud flats and at the edge of the Bure. At such times, as the crustaceans, playing in swarms, are driven into the shallows by their pursuers, they fling themselves to a height of several inches out of the water, the Flounder usually contriving to snap up

at least one or two. Occasionally, by the impetus of its rush, the fish fairly strands itself, but hurriedly and noisily flaps itself in an undulating manner backwards. On 8th October 1894, noticing a group of persons standing at the quayside, I joined them, to see that a large Flounder, heedless of their onlooking, was working up and down the piles, snapping at small Shrimps, which darted hurriedly out of its way. Some of the Shrimps jumped quite out of the water, the Flounder coming to the surface in chase of them. This went on for several minutes, until a wherryman, keener on the practical than the sentimental side of nature study, hurried up with a mop and attempted to capture the fish. It is needless to say it drew a line at treatment of this kind.

It was undoubtedly a very hungry Sturgeon that seized a fisherman's bait of sliced Herring in December 1894, and was successfully hooked and landed, the hook having afterwards to be cut out of its mouth. It measured $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet. This is the first Sturgeon I have known to be thus legitimately caught in this neighbourhood.

It is not usual for the Dory to be taken in the herring-nets. One, however, was found entangled in the nets of a Scotch boat off this coast. It

measured 2 feet in length and weighed $8\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. Inside it were found seven Herrings.

FISH IN ICE

In January 1895 some interesting correspondence was started in a Norfolk daily paper on the subject of fishes living in ice. The following letter "set the ball rolling":—

"SIR,—Would you mind informing me, by a footnote in your correspondence column, how long you think it possible for such a fish as a Dace, Minnow, or Perch to live in the centre of a solid block of ice? I am anxious to get reliable information from someone who thoroughly understands the subject, and having heard so many opinions, coupled with innumerable arguments, must be my excuse for troubling you.

"PISCATOR."

Amongst the replies to this was a note from "Stickleback," who stated—

"I have on several occasions seen Pike and other coarse fish frozen in the ice on our Broad, but have

never heard of their being found dead upon the breaking up of the frost," etc.

My name was suggested for a reply, and I was obliged to admit that I had not much experience in the matter. I had a fresh-water aquarium inadvertently left in the open, and before I was aware of it, the water began to solidify above, around, and beneath. The fish, narrowed down to an exceedingly small swim, were evidently in a bad way, and to save them, as well as the aquarium, a warmer temperature was selected forthwith. I have known Eels to come to the surface of a pond dead after the breaking up of a severe frost. Another correspondent wrote as follows:—

“I had in a large glass bowl several Goldfish and some Sticklebacks. The water in the bowl became almost a solid block of ice, and I noticed some of the Goldfish were lying on their sides, in what seemed to be a dying condition. After having sawed a circular hole in the surface ice, I placed them in a pail of water with the chill taken off, and placed them in a temperature of about 45 or 50 degrees. In an hour or two they seemed none the worse for the

adventure. The remaining fish were, however, frozen later on in the ice, which became a solid block, breaking the glass globe to pieces. I placed the ice containing the fish (which were Goldfish and Sticklebacks) in a vessel in the temperature of about 70 to 75 degrees, and when the ice had all thawed, I found every one floating on the top dead. I think this will show that when fish are frozen in a block of solid ice, they will not return to life again.

“E. A. C.”

ACTING ON THE DEFENSIVE

Several species of fish when taken alive show more or less fight. In May 1895 I was on the beach with some draw-netters who hauled ashore several small Gurnards. Upon handling one or two, they astonished me by the quick and decisive way they struck from right to left and *vice versâ*, with gill-covers opened, making vicious stabs with the sharp points with which they are armed.

Quite as designedly, and with even more show of intelligence, does the Lesser Weever fling itself, with its ugly dorsal fin distended obliquely, at any object that is near it. I have teased this squirming little rebel with my walking-stick as it lay swelling itself

with apparent rage upon the sand, and been struck with the accuracy of its aim. Twice out of three times has it hit the stick with the venomous fin-rays. Our fisherfolk—smelters, draw-netters, and shrimpers—have a wholesome respect for this small rascal, who now and again succeeds in wounding the fingers of the wariest; they detest him, too, and smash him on sight, the draw-netters invariably grinding him to death in the sand or mud with their heavy heels. I have known instances of serious inflammation following a Weever's stab. Fisherfolk, when hurt, say that the pain only subsides with the falling of the tide.

Whether the Pike when out of water has his faculties keen enough to know that his bite can hurt, I cannot say; it is sufficient for me to recall the surprise as well as pain given me by a five-pound Jack, that had been some hours out of the water. I was handling him, and admiring his sharp teeth, when he suddenly snapped and shut his jaws on my finger; and it took some minutes before I could free it by means of a stick, with which, with my left hand, I levered open his mouth.

SPRATS IN SPAWN

To this day there are folk, even amongst fishers, who cling to the error that "Whitebait are a species of themselves," as they put it; and many still believe the Sprat to be the young of the Herring. Placed side by side, there will be seen more difference between two of the selfsame length than between a Shad and a Herring of the same size.

It is pointed out that Sprats are "never caught in roe." This is not to be wondered at, for the fishing for Sprats (at Aldeburgh and Southwold) is usually over before the roe has sufficiently developed to be easily distinguished.

In December 1895 I put a rather large premium upon the first Sprat brought to me with ova. On the 5th I had two brought to me, which I despatched to Mr. Southwell, who wrote as follows:—

"I have examined the ovary from the Sprats you sent me, and have little doubt that the reproductive organ contained very rudimentary ova. They are very difficult to identify . . . in some the segregation of the yolk appeared evident when the tissue was hardened in proof spirit. Mr. Corder agrees

with this. So I think you may take it that the Sprats in question were females, and contained embryotic ova. I do not think this is a rare occurrence, but in more advanced state I have never seen it."

Still unsatisfied, I remained on the alert, while one or two fisherfolk were as eager to assist me. To a most unusual catch of Sprats made in February I was indebted for satisfactory evidence. On the 18th some large and plump examples were on sale, and one or two were reserved for me. One fish was full of ripe ova, which, on pressing the abdomen, oozed out in distinct yellow globules the size of a pin's head—indeed, they looked very much like mustard seeds, and were proportionately larger, and consequently not so numerous as those found in a Herring.

BULL-DOG VARIETY OF GURNARD

A most extraordinary example of the variety known as "Bull-dog" Gurnard—a Sappharine or "Latchett"—was sent to me in May 1897. It measured 16 inches in length. The head had the appearance of having been "stove in," the lower jaw

protruding some way beyond the very puffy upper lip. This example was figured in the *Zoologist* in July 1897.

LARGE HERRING

The largest Herring I ever saw was a Norwegian example brought here in December 1900. Amongst quite a number of 15-inch specimens shown to me, one half an inch longer was discovered. It weighed over 14 ounces. Another 15-inch fish was $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in girth, and scaled $14\frac{1}{2}$ ounces.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT

A steam trawler from this port, named the *Teal*, in June 1899 went on a fishing trip to the Bay of Biscay. On the 24th this vessel landed at the Fishwharf quite a miscellaneous assortment of interesting species of fishes. The catches roughly enumerated were as follow:—50 Dorys, 100 Sea Bream, 3 trunks of Piper Gurnards, 500 Hake, besides small numbers of other rock-loving fishes. They made disappointing prices, and were speedily distributed amongst the various fishmongers, not for remunerative disposal, but as novelties for

exhibition. Folks are slow to experiment on strange fishes, and prejudices are not easily overcome. I went round to several shops, and discovered among the sundries Hakes, a 14-inch Greater Forkbeard, and several Rose Perch (*Scorpaena dactyloptera*).

The steam trawler's experiment proved a losing one, the nets being sadly mauled by the rocky grounds fished over; and the small prices realised, far from offering further inducement to fish in the bay, completely banished the idea of further developments; nor would fair catches under more favourable conditions answer while the public remain prejudiced.

In July of the same year a trawler landed two boxes of Rose Perch, described as "Norway Haddocks," from the neighbourhood of Heligoland. In small lots these were disposed of as "window attractions"; very few were afterwards sold for food, the majority eventually going into the refuse boxes under the counter.

DOUBLE BRILL

In January 1900 I met with a Double Brill with the "eye-notch" quite as well defined as in the

Double Turbot already referred to. Both sides were coloured. At the same time I examined a Smeared Dab (*Pleuronectes microcephalus*) normally shapen but with both sides coloured.

OTHER DEFORMITIES

Just as the Cod and some other "round" fishes are afflicted with deformities in the anterior portion of their bodies, so there are to be found malformations near the tail. On Breydon in August 1901 a Smelt was netted, the posterior end of which suddenly turned up just above the anal fin, and having formed a kind of apex on the back, as suddenly descended, after describing a rather pointed arch. The tail was also out of proportion, and forked very much like that of a Herring.

A Haddock with a crooked back, exactly corresponding with the Smelt, came to hand in March 1902; and in June 1902 I obtained the tail of a Skate which, in curves, zigzagged the whole of its length, describing three half-circles to the left and the same number to the right.

On one occasion I obtained an Eel zigzagged the whole of its length in a similar manner.

LASSOING A STURGEON

Some years ago three smelters were rowing up Breydon, when one of them, known as "Snicker" Larn, espied something floating upstream that struck him as being very much like a bush. Curiosity prompted him to steer for it, when, to his surprise, he discovered it to be a large Sturgeon, to all appearances "asleep" upon the surface. Cautiously the boat approached it while Larn made a running noose. This he adroitly slipped over the tail of the fish and pulled tight. At this it suddenly started and swam away as in terror, pulling the boat some yards along with it. To the smelters' annoyance, the noose slipped, and the fish for a while continued its exercise. When it became quiet again, however, it was once more lassoed. "I took care it didn't slip this time," said Larn to me. The fish again dashed off, pulling the boat fully a hundred yards. By this time the men had shortened the rope considerably, and managed to get alongside the fish, when they belaboured its head with a "wriggler," a kind of small iron crowbar much in use at one time for disturbing worms by "wriggling" it in the turf. Having stunned their prize, they hailed another

boat's crew, who came to their help and assisted in getting the fish into their boat. It was sold in the fish market, and realised £2. It weighed $11\frac{1}{2}$ stones and measured 7 feet 6 inches in length.

I remember another instance where a large Sturgeon found itself in difficulties on a flat from which the tide was ebbing. It managed to flounder and tumble into a drain or creek, at the entrance of which two Breydoners planted their boat, and by means of nets stretched across and strengthened here and there by oars and bottom boards driven into the mud, kept it there until the tide had fallen, and they could with ease catch it.

BRILL TURBOT

In February 1897 my attention was called to a very strange fish combining the characteristics of the Brill and the Turbot. It had the colour of the Brill and the shape of the Turbot, but with an entire absence of spiny processes. The fishmonger assured me he had seen similar "freaks" before. The example was about 8 lbs. in weight, and far too expensive to warrant my sending it away to an expert zoologist on "spec." For a long time I kept

on the alert for another, hoping all the time it might not be quite so large; and on 13th January 1902 I was fortunate to meet with another, which I sent to Mr. Southwell, who forwarded it to Mr. Lydekker at the Cromwell Road Natural History Museum. Mr. Southwell afterwards wrote to me:—

“You will see by enclosed letter from Mr. Lydekker that there is no doubt about the fish being a hybrid between the Turbot and Brill, and that they are glad of it at the B.M. It was more use there than it would have been here (Norwich).”

HERMAPHRODITE HERRING

Through the courtesy of a local fish curer I was given the combined roe and milt taken from a Herring in January 1902. It was forwarded to Mr. Southwell, who wrote an article upon it in the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, March 1902, series 7, vol. ix. He writes:—

“Dr. Günther remarks (*Study of Fishes*) that instances of so-called hermaphroditism have been observed in the Codfish, some of the Pleuronectidæ, and in the Herring; but I believe that in the latter species such instances are very rare. It may therefore

be worth recording an example recently sent me by Mr. Patterson of Yarmouth for examination. . . . The example sent me, which had been removed from the fish, was of the usual form of the complete roe: it was 130 millim. long; the anterior portion, consisting of the female organ, was 95 millim. in length and 30 millim. at its greatest depth. The male organ, or milt, occupied the posterior portion of the abdominal cavity and was 35 millim. in length, tapering off sharply towards its termination. The female roe was divided transversely into two distinct lobes, each contained in the usual investing membrane, but the male portion (milt) was in a single mass, the division between the two organs being more or less vertical, but the former extending farthest to the rear along the dorsal portion. The lobes of the female organ thinned out towards their posterior outer margins, and a portion of the milt obtruded between them in the form of a wedge. Both bodies were fully matured and had a healthy appearance, but owing to their having been removed from the fish, which had been previously smoke-dried, a more minute examination was impossible. . . . That the occurrence of such compound sexual organs in the Herring is of very rare occurrence (it is more frequent in

members of the Cod family) seems probable, for I cannot learn of examples having been previously observed by the Yarmouth fish curers, through whose hands many millions of these fish pass annually, and who are very ready to mark any departure from the normal."

Another hermaphroditic Herring was recorded from Cley in December 1902. Having been, in all probability, taken off this coast, its record will not be out of place beside my own. A gentleman had cooked a Bloater when he noticed the bi-sexual characteristics of the fish. The milt and the roe were situated in the usual cavity, terminating near the tail, and in this particular case the milt occupied three-fourths of the entire length, the remaining portion being perfectly formed roe. The roe and milt were separated by a thin tissue which formed a complete partition. The finder regretted the spoiling of the specimen by cooking. In the autumn fishing of 1903 a fish merchant informed me he had seen a cooked Herring one breakfast-time which, on being opened, displayed a perfect coupling of the sexes, one lobe being of roe, the other milt.

But the strangest instance of a hermaphroditic Herring occurred on 1st December, when a person,

who had grilled a light-cured "red," discovered, on opening it, a strange admixture of roe and milt. It was considerably discoloured by smoke and heat, but distinctly exhibited the strangeness of its conformation. One lobe was at either end milt, the centre third being ova bevelled to them. The other lobe was roe at the posterior half, the other being milt. Numbers of persons flocked to the fish salesman at whose wharf-office it was left for me to call round and see it. The owner intended to have it placed in spirits and preserved.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

ON DOGS

DOGS do not like me, and I do not care for them ; and the following notes about them would not have been written but for the fact that the animals mentioned exhibited not only uncommon intelligence, but a thorough sportive disposition, and a peculiar persistency in following up the bent of their genius.

Lubbock, in his *Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk*, mentions the curly-coated Retriever as “the one species of dog very common here, though not peculiar to the county—the Yarmouth Water-dog, as they are generally termed in other parts of England.” He then refers to a dog of this kind kept at a drainage-mill on the Breydon marshes. In winter this dog would go off by itself and search the flint walls for wounded wildfowl: these, as is well known, always endeavour to creep into some nook or corner. When the wind blew from the

north-east, and ducks were numerous on Breydon, he sometimes carried home eight or nine fowl of various kinds in a morning. The wildfowlers at that time—"many years ago," wrote Lubbock, when referring to this particular incident—did not carry "hand" guns, so many disabled birds would flutter away from them over the ice or in the dusk. Having left a bird at the mill, the dog would continue his search, picking up the trail where he had left off. He resented not only interference, but even intrusion, and seeing a man coming towards him, would cross a wide ditch and go the longest way home.

Another dog of a kindred species was kept by a shore gunner, for whom it used to retrieve wounded or slaughtered fowl. This dog would, at certain times, more especially in periods of severe frost and strong winds, go hunting on his own account, and take home such fowl as he could find. From his master, who worked in one of the shipyards, he would sneak quietly away, and having discovered a duck or some wading bird, come back to the yard and lay it at his feet. No one else dared to touch the fowl.

An aged gunner of my acquaintance, a man rather above the average intelligence of his class, used to

shoot a great deal, in the 'fifties and 'sixties, on the beach, sandhills, and marshes, with a shoulder-gun. "Billy" had two or three dogs in his time that shared his sport with him; one, a white mongrel, was of great assistance at fighting. On those marshes—then known as the "allotments," and now carefully drained, and in places cropped—the townsfolk used to turn hundreds of geese. Towards evening the gooseherds came to bring home their respective flocks, and had considerable difficulty in persuading them to leave this, to them, paradise of swamp. "Billy's" dog, on arrival, would materially help rounding up, hustling, and driving roadwards the laggard geese, after which he would place himself at his master's disposal in retrieving such fowl as might be shot.

Another equally devoted mongrel would frequently scent small birds in the furze patches on the common, and as they were flushed he would spring adroitly into the air and catch them in his mouth. He once ran down and caught a Lark, carrying it home in his mouth uninjured. A neighbour secured the bird, which was put in a cage and lived for three or four years in captivity. No less than five different Woodcocks did this dog, in his time, track down and

capture as they sprang at his coming. He would also dive into the ditches, seize a small Pike, and bring it out alive.

On one occasion a friend was out shooting with "Billy" near the allotments, and had reached a field where turnips were growing. The friend had a mind for a turnip, being somewhat hungry after a long walk, but could not reach it, owing to a high bank and a ditch at the foot of it. "Fetch one!" said his master; and the dog sprang over. Fixing upon a good turnip, the dog wrung and wrenched at it until he succeeded in pulling it up; then back he came with it dangling in his mouth. It happened that the farmer, who was some distance off, saw the dog's strange behaviour; and shortly after, on meeting "Billy," he expressed surprise at the incident, more especially at the dog's vanishing over the bank with it.

"He's very fond of turnips!" said the dog's master. This still further bewildered the farmer; but on being told the actual circumstances, he was greatly amused.

A gunner had been shooting by the Bure-side, having with him an intelligent Retriever bitch. He had loaded his gun, and in a moment of absent-

mindedness left the powder-flask on a stone whereon the axis of a mill-wheel turned. When nearing home he suddenly missed his flask, and happening to turn round, saw it in his dog's mouth, she having picked it up and followed closely at his heels, carrying it.

STOAT AND WEASEL

On the sandhills beyond Caister, where rabbits abound, the Stoat is not unknown. Nearer home, however, its appearance is an "event." Only on two or three occasions have I met with one on the sand dunes near the town. One poor bewildered thing, hunting for an unwary Snow-Bunting, or anything else that might fall to his lot, was suddenly surprised by a friend of mine, who was quite as amazed himself—so much so indeed that ere it occurred to him to use his gun the animal had viciously jumped at his legs and literally forced him to an impromptu jig, when, as if by magic, it disappeared, and hunt as he would he could not discover the hole into which it must have vanished. The probability is that he closed with his heel the burrow the Stoat entered the moment the animal had disappeared.

Another Stoat regularly patrolled the seashore

morning after morning in search of food; its foot-prints were visible leading to and from the sandhills, whilst here and there broken fragments and well-cleaned carapaces of the Spider Crab (*Hyas coarctatus*) were to be found. These crabs no doubt offered the animal a pleasing change diet from the Larks and Pipits it must have been seeking before the dawn, and while they were yet napping in the tussocks of maram-grass.

One morning in August 1900 I was quietly drifting downstream on Breydon, when I noticed some small animal suddenly plunge in from the walls and commence swimming bravely into the broad stream of the "channel," undoubtedly with the intention of seeing what he could do amongst a number of gulls gathered on the five-stake flat. Although not intending to get too close upon him, my boat drifted across his track, when the animal—a Weasel—showed fight, and endeavoured to climb into my punt, a proceeding I objected to, and I was obliged to gently tap him on the head with the blade of my oar. He sank quite a yard, squirming and protesting, but on rising to the surface very wisely turned shorewards, and, vigorously paddling, soon reached the bank, disappearing in the flintstone-

fronted embankment. I had no desire to hurt him, but a desperate Weasel in the confined quarters of a punt was by no means a desirable passenger. I have always regretted since that I did not wait to see how he fared amongst the powerful gulls that had tempted him to the adventure.

AN UP-TO-DATE BAT

Since the introduction of powerful electric street lamps into the town, great numbers of various moths occasionally dance around them, baffled and bewildered by the glare. I have seen a wall opposite a lamp speckled with resting insects. Late on the night of 21st September 1903 I observed a small Bat flittering around the lamps on the North Quay. It had evidently discovered that prey was to be found at a late hour around the lamps, and intended to profit by knowledge of it.

FORAGING RATS

The Brown Rat is by no means a scarce animal in Yarmouth; and no one has a good word to say for it, its name being associated with much that is evil.

But there can be no doubt its presence among the flint-faced walls of Breydon, where it lives on the carrion drifted there by wind and tide, is beneficial rather than not. It is simply astonishing how soon the carcass of a large gull, a dog, or even a pig is reduced to an inoffensive skeleton, thus proving that rats are numerous there. The beast has become extremely cunning, and seldom shows itself until dusk, especially during the shooting season, when rat-potting chances are never rejected, even by those who are eager for nobler game. Some of the older rats are woefully mangy with unsightly tumours, bald patches, and broken tails, testifying to hard knocks, fierce fights, and unholy living.

Among the timbers of the Gorleston breakwater in the inaccessible fastnesses of mazes of timber, a number of rats have their abode, in summer varying their dietary with the crumbs and crusts thrown away by visitors. In autumn the herring refuse is never-failing; and in winter the remnants of crustaceans, dead seabirds, and even mollusca bear witness to meals enjoyed in the long dark hours after nightfall. The footmarks of the rats may be discovered on the sands around, over which they have been prowling, a long streak here and there

bespeaking the occasional trailing of a tail. Quite half a mile away from the breakwater I have seen these unmistakable tell-tale imprints along the tide-mark, and it is quite easy, after a little practice, to form a pretty correct idea of the hour "longtail" was out on his travels by noting their distance from the last high-water mark.

A PLAGUE OF BLACK RATS

Although the existence of the Black Rat (*Mus rattus*) in Yarmouth was known to me in my earliest years, and an odd carcass was now and again thrown out from a malthouse or a sail-loft, to be kicked about the streets, it was not until 1895 that I began seriously to make inquiries with regard to its numbers and behaviour in the older parts of the town, where it seemed to be more at home than in the newer portions. I found out that its presence in the malthouses during the drying season was by no means unknown, or seldom noticed, whilst at other times, when lack of food in these places drove it into warehouses and sail-lofts, it became quite a nuisance, devouring any lumps of Russian tallow left about by the sail-sewers, and committing havoc amongst the

grocers' goods. At these times, too, the rats made themselves at home in many of the cottages, one old lady having to remove because of the persistent way they occupied her pantry, and even came into the kitchen and made themselves at home. My inquiries, and a price set upon each clean-killed specimen, soon began to bear fruit, and day after day dead Black Rats were brought to me. Two examples, one an immature animal with a small white spot on the breast (a not unusual occurrence), were despatched to Norwich and a couple of others to Edinburgh. Respecting the latter pair, Mr. W. Eagle Clarke wrote at once:—

March 5, 1896.—"The rats you send are most undoubtedly the old English species, *Mus rattus*, and their occurrence in abundance in Yarmouth is an interesting fact. *Mus rattus* and *Mus alexandrinus* are considered to be *races* of the same species; the black *rattus* being the form found in temperate regions, and the brown *alexandrinus* the tropical one."

On 16th March I obtained two adult Black Rats, and saw lying dead, and too far gone for preservation, four rats of a bluish grey colour below, and of a rich brown above; their long tails, large ears, and

small size all going to prove that I had fallen in with the rarer *Mus alexandrinus*. From that date the Black Rat turned up day after day for a long period; indeed, until I had secured considerably over a hundred. On 20th March I obtained an adult female with white feet, also a small white spot on the chest and another on the head. Aged examples are adorned with a sprinkling of very long hairs, some of them intensely black, with a few quite white showing here and there.

It was suggested to me that some of these had probably come ashore from grain-ships, but as these usually lie on the west side of the river, and South-town is quite apart from it, this theory was hardly feasible. The older part of Yarmouth, known as the "Row" district, is the stronghold of the animal; and it was not until a year or so ago that it had crossed Regent Street and made its appearance in the northern part of the town.

For a very long time *Mus alexandrinus* evaded me, that variety being curiously scarce, although quite able to hold its own with *rattus*. A higher premium certainly conduced to the capture of one or two. In the latter part of April 1896 a fleet of old fishing smacks, that had been brought (for some

useless purpose) from Grimsby, were found to be infested with these rats, and as it was anticipated these vessels might be sent to sea, endeavours were made to exterminate them. For this purpose iron trays, covered with red hot ashes and certain combustibles, were placed in the holds and cabins of two or three vessels at a time; above these fires was shot a considerable amount of pepper. The "smokers" immediately repaired to the decks and shut down every avenue of escape, plastering soft clay or mud over every crevice through which the fumes could escape. In the morning the hatches were taken off and the cabins ventilated. Here and there laid rats of all ages and sizes dead from suffocation—in the bunks, in cupboards, everywhere; but the majority were found in the neighbourhood of the trays, as if the poor brutes, gathering to see what strange burnings these were, had been overcome as they discussed the situation. On 12th June I went down a "fresh-opened" smack with the "smoker" and saw quite a "pedful" of dead rats, amongst them some fine examples of *Mus alexandrinus*. I filled my handkerchief with them; but very few were preserved, for the baking process had made them so susceptible to decomposition that in an hour or two they

were beyond manipulation. A young taxidermist managed to skin and cure eight of them, and then desisted.

I obtained two half-grown examples of *Mus rattus* alive in a wire trap, and despatched them to the Zoological Gardens. They were returned promptly the next day with hardly a suggestion of thanks, and with the information that "they had already more than they wanted." I supplied several museums with specimens, including Cromwell Road.

In July 1901 a tradesman, living on the quay, was greatly annoyed by the misdoings of the Black Rats on his premises. He set a steel fall, and found in it next day the tail of a victim that had managed to get away with the loss of that lengthy member. He good-humouredly showed the tail to his next-door neighbour, demanding the owner of it, should he by chance secure it. And sure enough, two days after the trapping of the injured animal actually came about; and the rat, minus a tail, with the close-shorn stump almost perfectly healed, was taken to the first and rightful captor, with a message attached to it asking to have the doubly unfortunate quadruped re-tailed!

PISCIVOROUS VOLES

In August 1894 I went for a day's fishing on Lound Run, a few miles from Yarmouth. Whilst sitting in a boat I observed some small animal, and subsequently another. I was not sure that it was not a young Otter that had come up out of the water at the margin of the opposite bank, dragging—I could not tell what—with it, and disappearing in the grass. For a time my curiosity abated, and I thought no more of the matter, even after walking later on to the spot and finding the broken valves of the Swan Mussel lying about.

Believing at that time the Water Vole (*Microtus amphibius*) to be an entirely herbivorous animal, it did not occur to me that this must have been the little fellow at work. But a letter came to me on 11th April 1896 from the late Sir Edward Newton, in which he wrote:—

“I see you mention in your paper that the Water Vole is ‘exclusively herbivorous’; now on the 11th April 1884, when with Mr. Southwell on the marshes near Ranworth, we observed on the banks of the dykes quantities of the empty shells of the large bivalve (*Anadonta*, I think it is) which had one

valve almost destroyed, a portion only remaining attached to the other valve by the hinge, which was seldom damaged, and we came to the conclusion that this was the work of a Water Vole, unless it was that of an Otter, as there were no other animals which could have performed the operation so neatly, and so thought the Voles found it more convenient to hold the closed shell the same way, as with one exception the *same valve* was always broken; and we must have seen at least fifty of the shells so treated."

This communication revived my interest in Lound, and at the first convenient opportunity I went there again. On 12th September I examined quite a number of broken valves lying upon one or two tiny islands just above the surface of the lake. Quite little heaps were to be seen, the shells broken open exactly as described, with smaller chips in profusion showing where nibbling had been done; and what was still more convincing, where the Voles had been seated, their excrement lay fresh and unmistakable. The dung of the Vole is very unlike that of the Otter; besides, Otters are not to be found in that neighbourhood. Shortly after this I received a communication from West Norfolk, wherein mention was made of the way Water Voles secured Crayfish

and brought them out upon the bank to break and devour at their leisure.

In the August of 1896 I was in my houseboat at Kendal Dyke, in the Broad district. I had taken some small fish, and afterwards threw them upon the bank behind me. On the morning following my piscatorial feat I was surprised to find my Roach half eaten, the upper sides being devoured to the backbone. There were unmistakable signs of some rodent having been there. I pegged down some more small Roach in the evening, and by keeping a careful outlook discovered the depredators to be none other than Water Voles! In neither instance the Vole has been proved to be guilty of any serious misdemeanour; and I shall be sorry indeed to know that my satisfactorily proving him to be at least piscivorous in his tastes, does him the slightest harm. He is a delightful, trim, unobtrusive little fellow, good company enough too, when one is in the solitudes of "the silent highway." His merry gambols with his kind are pleasing to watch, and the way he spends his idle moments and his busy hours is most interesting to observe.

Albinos and varieties of this species are by no

means common. Four white examples were killed, however, a few miles out of the town in 1892; and a cream-coloured one was noticed by a ditch-side on the Caister marshes a year or two after.

THE MOLE

The Mole is common enough everywhere, but few persons beyond its enemy the mole-catcher pay much heed to its doings. In frosty weather it is a most reliable barometer, and exhibits its "forecast" of a coming break by the fresh mole heaps thrown up in its travels.

In the summer of 1894 I caught one as it was shifting its quarters from one marsh to another. I seized the startled creature by the neck, but the lissom way in which it squirmed and endeavoured to seize my fingers, together with its shrill squeaks, induced me speedily to drop it into a handkerchief, and thence into an empty pail, wherein it danced and capered in quite a frenzy of rage and fright. Intending to take it home and make a pet of it, I left it there all night with some rubbish for burrowing in, but found it dead in the morning.

In 1895 I discovered several cream-coloured

specimens in a field near Acle. I have seen odd ones swimming voluntarily in the Bure.

CETACEAN NOTES

The Porpoise, although claiming to be common off the Yarmouth coast, is somewhat capricious in its visits. Odd examples and sometimes small companies are seen tumbling about in the roadstead, and they disappear as unexpectedly as they come. In autumn the Porpoise hangs around the herring shoals, and now and again makes a great mistake by entangling itself in the herring-nets. It is treated to a short shrift indeed when hauled aboard the drifter in order to save still further muddling and mauling of the nets. Two men, who had been using a 'longshore net, secured a Porpoise, which they brought into the town alive on a net-barrow for exhibition. Thinking to keep it fresh and lively, they occasionally poured a pail of fresh water over it, and tried their hardest to pour the water down its blowholes! They eventually succeeded in suffocating the hapless beast.

During the year 1891 an unusual number of

cetaceans visited the Norfolk coast. My first record was a White-beaked Dolphin (*Delphinus albirostris*), 4 feet 8 inches in length, that was washed up dead on the beach at Yarmouth on 19th April. I found the skull and fragments of another on 14th June; the skull measured 10 inches in length. A third example, 7 feet 4 inches long, was discovered floating up the river on 27th August. This was secured by some boatmen, who created a scandal by exhibiting it upon the Marine Parade on a wheel-barrow, the aroma in a day or two not only drawing together all the flies in the neighbourhood, but attracting the attention of a large circle of interested spectators, including the sanitary authorities, whereby its sojourn within sight of its native element was considerably shortened. Dead Porpoises were washed up on the beach on 18th July, and 1st and 4th November.

A full-grown female example of the Lesser Rorqual (*Balænoptera rostrata*), by losing its bearings among the numerous sandbanks off the coast, eventually found its way into the harbour on 8th June 1891, where it was immediately attacked by a number of Gorleston lifeboatmen

and others, giving them such a chase as had never before taxed their agility and boatmanship. In one of its wildest dashes the frightened animal smashed its nose, and then, profusely bleeding, it was driven between the "dolphins" (a kind of landing stage) and the quayside piles, where it was attacked with iron creepers, boathooks, and other improvised weapons, and secured also by ropes, and made a complete and helpless prisoner. In about an hour it had succumbed to its injuries, when it was towed to the lifeboat shed and hauled upon the stocks by means of the windlass. Here for a day or two it was exhibited to great numbers of townsfolk, and afterwards given a public *post mortem* dissection, to the no small gain of those who had secured it. The skin was afterwards stuffed by a local taxidermist, and taken for a short time on tour, spending the winter in the late Royal Westminster Aquarium, and the following summer in a large building on the Marine Parade at Yarmouth, where the writer made a fair summer's earnings by exhibiting it to many hundreds of visitors. "The Gorleston Whale" was talked of far and near. The animal was 30 feet long; 18 feet in girth; span of tail, 8 feet 2 inches; length of pectoral fins, 4 feet 6

inches; length of jaws, 6 feet 6 inches. The baleen ran up to 15 inches in length in the longest plates.

In September of the same year a considerable shoal of White-beaked Dolphins managed to get into a kind of *cul-de-sac* made by an accumulation of sand (since much altered), where, the tide being low, they floundered about in an excited manner. They would have "retraced their steps," but failing, made considerable efforts until, splashing, and blowing, and thrashing with their tails, they at length surmounted the barrier and reached deep water, their subsequent lively frolics indicating their delight at having escaped.

A fine female White-beaked Dolphin was taken in the nets of the herring-drifter *Thankful* off this coast on 13th June 1894. The beast, still alive, was bought at the Fishwharf, and placed on a barrow, on which it was driven into the town for exhibition. I met it in the street, still living, as it was being trundled to the purchaser's fish-house, its travels having been curtailed by police orders. With difficulty, and much against its will, I opened its mouth to admire the fine set of 80 conical, clean, pearly teeth. The animal measured 8 feet

6 inches in length. When taken into the house it was stabbed with a knife, against which treatment it most stoutly resisted, flinging itself about in its agony and fright in a very desperate manner, the blood spurting all over the place, converting it into about the worst shambles I ever saw. Two men were knocked over by its struggles, and a large herring-rack was smashed into pieces. On being opened, a foetal young one, 3 feet 6 inches long, was found. Its head was somewhat blunter than that of its parent. It weighed $4\frac{1}{2}$ stones, and was almost fully matured. The estimated weight of the old one was about 6 cwt.

On 14th November of the same year a Lowestoft drifter found entangled in its nets a Grampus 7 feet 5 inches in length. It was dragged from Lowestoft to Yarmouth by two quiet, well-behaved fishermen, who did some fairly good business by exhibiting it. Four days afterwards I purchased a second example of this species, taken in a precisely similar manner by a Yarmouth boat. It was 2 inches shorter, but as like to it as the proverbial "two peas."

Mr. Southwell, referring to these two examples, in the *Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich*

Naturalists' Society, thought the fact of the two individuals being so nearly of the same age might seem to indicate that the Grampus occasionally gives birth to two young ones. The *post mortem* of the second Grampus may be worth repeating in Mr. Southwell's words:—

“The second example Mr. Patterson saw on the Fishwharf at Yarmouth on the 19th November, and purchased it for the Norwich Museum, where it arrived on the 20th, when I had an opportunity of examining it. Owing to the skin being considerably abraded by rough usage, it was not in a condition to make a perfect specimen for the Museum collection; I therefore telegraphed to Mr. (now Dr.) S. F. Harmer at the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, and at his request sent it to that institution, after having made some careful measurements, which are worth recording, by way of comparison with those of the adult.

“The animal was a female, and had probably never taken solid food, no trace of which, as I was informed by Mr. Harmer, was to be found in the stomach or intestines. The teeth had not been cut, but could be plainly felt in the upper jaw. Mr. Harmer tells me there were other in-

dications of extreme juvenility, the foetal structures connected with the placenta being very large. The presumption is, therefore, that the animal was still sucking.

“The following is a description of this handsome cetacean. The dorsal surface glossy black, with the exception of a somewhat oval and sharply defined patch of white commencing in a point just above the eye and extending backward to above and slightly beyond the posterior insertion of the pectoral limb. This patch of white, or rather cream-yellow (probably owing to discoloration of the juvenile skin), was about three times the length of its deepest measurement. The ventral surface of the animal was of the same yellowish white, divided from the black colour of the upper parts by a sharply defined line, very graceful, but difficult to describe, commencing at the point of the rostrum and passing along the upper border of the mouth, from which it was deflected, to and under the flipper (which was black), to within a few inches of the ventral margin of the body, where it continued horizontally till about the centre of the dorsal fin; then taking a sudden bend upwards and backwards till it reached the

centre of the vertical depth of the body at a point immediately below the posterior border of the dorsal fin, it continued horizontally as far as midway between the posterior border of the dorsal fin and the insertion of the caudal appendage, when it suddenly turned upon itself, slanting downwards to within one-third of the distance from the first deflection, and resumed the horizontal line until brought to a point by the curvature of the body, where it merged into the uniform black colour of the extremity. The under surface of the caudal fin was also of the same yellowish white, which extended a short distance along the inferior caudal ridge, gradually, but still sharply defined, giving place to the black colour of the under surface of the tapering extremity."

A detailed table of minute measurements followed.

On 3rd December 1900 a fine female Lesser Rorqual was cast ashore, dead, on Caister beach. It was discovered tumbling about in the surf, and a man waded into the water, and, having cut a hole in the jaw, secured it by a rope, and in this way, with help, hauled it farther northwards and secured it on the shore. There was some talk about a steam drifter having struck a whale out at sea; but no marks that

I could see pointed to any impact with the sharp prow of a fishing boat. In places the skin was much abraded, in all probability by its being toppled about amongst sandbanks. Its length was 30 feet; span of tail-flukes $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet from point to point; pectoral flukes 4 feet in length. The smell was by no means pleasant; and after both interesting and disgusting numerous visitors, the animal was hacked to pieces and buried in the sand.

The innovation of the steam drifter, and the great numbers of herring fishers now at work, must have the effect of driving away the cetaceans and making them yearly scarcer in this neighbourhood.

TOAD NOTES

The list of east coast *Reptilia* and *Amphibia* is not a large one, although comprising most of the very small array of British species. Nor does the race exhibit very marked traits of intelligence, so that an incident worthy of note is of extremely exceptional occurrence.

A cream-coloured Common Toad discovered in the neighbourhood in 1891 was incarcerated in a large fern-case, thus at once removing it

from a sphere of usefulness and ending its adventures.

Into this same case was introduced a Viviparous Lizard, which, after a few days' tenancy, was suddenly missing. On search being made, the end of its tail was seen protruding from the mouth of a toad, the unfortunate creature having been seized and swallowed by an amphibian by no means so long as itself!

LOBSTERS

Deformities and interesting accidents are far less frequent among Lobsters than among Crabs; at least, so my experience leads me to believe. In June 1895 I was fortunate in seeing a fairly large Lobster that not a great while previously had lost a pincer claw by some accident. But a stump—a less than half-length piece, in fact, of the joint or section next the carapace—remained, out of the centre of which sprang a minute but perfect new claw very little more than a fifth of the length of the full-grown claw remaining intact on the other side.

Two pincer claws of Lobsters came to hand in July 1901; one had the free chelæ half the normal

length, and the other had the fixed end curved the wrong way, after the manner of the beak of the Avocet. Two teeth-like processes, however, met the free chelæ in the latter example, so that it was quite capable of strongly seizing any object.

CRAB NOTES

In January and February there appears to be an inshoring of Spider Crabs. The species known as *Hyas coarctatus* is in this colder part of the year frequently thrown ashore by the waves, where, feebly struggling, it falls an easy prey to the Hooded Crows, or is flung among the flotsam at the tide-mark, to be presently covered by the drift sand. It is usually found in a soft state, the old jacket having been but recently cast. The frost very soon puts an end to its forceless squirming.

On 1st October 1891 a very fine Edible Crab, measuring $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the carapace and scaling 12 lbs., seized a mussel used as bait by an angler from one of the piers, who secured it, the animal having made its escape less possible by entangling the line about its claws. This, like occasional specimens taken in the shrimp-nets, had been swept south-

wards from the Cromer crab grounds by a strong tide.

Myriads of Shore Crabs (*Carcinus mænas*) swarm on Breydon mud flats. The small trawl-nets, used for procuring the "Eelpouts" (Viviparous Blennies) that are used as baits for eel-lines, come up with hundreds at a haul. The eel babblers are pestered by them, sometimes half a dozen gathering on and clinging to the worms upon their line. Anglers spend half their time rebaiting the hooks so assiduously stripped by them every time the line is put overboard. Up the Bure, even into the fresh waters, they travel, everywhere annoying, and constantly trying the tempers of those whose lines and nets they infest. Anglers for "butts" (flounders) in the Bure usually smash everyone they haul in, having, not the satisfaction of minimising the evil, but revenge on a particular individual who has tried, perhaps, to add injury to insult by endeavouring to hurt the fingers that peevishly wrenched it off the baits. In the late autumn of 1898 a local angling club thought to turn the perseverance and numbers as well as the greed of the pugnacious crabs to account by offering prizes for the greatest weight taken on one line. One fellow

baiting with a string of "fresh" Whittings secured first prize with $11\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. ; the second prize man fished with a sheep's head.

Of the many thousands of Shore Crabs I have seen and examined I only once met with a specimen with a deformed pincer claw, the upper or free chelæ being only half the normal length, and slightly up-turned instead of rounded.

Among the many deformities I have met with in *Cancer pagurus*—the Edible Crab—may be mentioned the following :—

1. *May* 29, 1897.—The free chelæ on the larger pincer claw when held point downwards was strikingly suggestive of a Wellington boot, an extra point curving off at a right angle, with a small knob in the part corresponding with the instep. This specimen was figured in the *Zoologist*.

2. *April* 30, 1898.—A large claw of the Edible Crab brought me which had the fixed chelæ supplemented by a second placed at half a right angle to it, but instead of being only one-pointed at the end, divided, and became V-shaped.

3. *July* 10, 1899.—A large crab-claw on this date was given me, the upper or free chelæ having three points to it, the lowest point shutting to the lower chelæ in the usual way. The three points

made quite a W. [I obtained one very similar to this in July 1901.]

4. *Sept.* 19, 1899.—A large claw at a fishmonger's was discovered to have an extra chelæ growing from below the fixed point, and almost at right angles to it; this at the end looked very like a *fleur de lis*. It was despatched to Cambridge.

5. (a) The small claw of an Edible Crab, had a V-shaped point, very like a Swallow's tail.

(b) Another possessed two points, both free, and working as if on a hinge. [*Sept.* 17, 1900.]

6. *April* 13, 1901.—The oddest malformation I have yet obtained was a small claw of a large Edible Crab. It possessed three distinct points, and had two separate joints, *i.e.* a V-shaped point that worked on its own hinge, and the single point on its own distinct pivot.

7. *May* 27, 1901.—The pincer claw of a Crab had on the free chelæ near its point a large knobbed process as large as a bean. When closed the claw had the appearance of grasping a big black bead.

8. *Sept.* 8, 1903.—A big claw from a large Crab had a point growing out from near the centre of the last section, or "palm," and at right angles to the fixed chelæ. Between them protruded a small point. After being exhibited at a Zoological Society's meeting, this specimen was handed over to the Natural History Museum.

9. On the same date a second came to hand, having the fixed chelæ short and stumpy, yet very sharp at the end. Held sideways in the hand, the

grotesque member looked for all the world like the head and mandibles of a Macaw, only the free chelæ was not quite so much curved.

The Common Shore Crab has a habit of hiding in hollows in the "ronds" that still border Breydon in places, when the tide has receded from the flats. Those unable to scuttle into hiding, and left on the flats, creep under the matted *Zostera marina*, and there remain until the tide returns; others sink themselves into the soft ooze which finds its level immediately above them. Those in the hollows of the ronds—holes scooped out by the constant lave of the water—lie piled upon each other in heaps, sometimes hundreds thick; here they remain mutually agreed upon a toleration and good behaviour that far from characterise them when the flood-tide again sets them at liberty, to scuttle in search of food or fight, as the case may be. I first discovered these monster gatherings when, in cutting a rond-edge vertically, so as to face it with wood, to form a kind of quayside for my houseboat, the spade sliced through quite a peck of them.

I have had many a bit of fun with the Shore Crabs that haunt the "corner" of Breydon where my

houseboat is located. After meals, the waste pieces of fish, bloater-skins, and other offal are thrown into the shallow water, to the intense interest of these scavengers. Bones, too large for some little fellow to drag away, give occasion for a show of bullying at the "claws" of a larger relative. Free fights take place between evenly matched rivals, and a great deal of threatening is indulged in. It is seldom anything serious happens, for the weaker one promptly shambles off to a safe or respectable distance, and the successful claimant either shuffles off with its prize to the shelter of a piece of seawrack, or, if its "find" be too large, begins to pull off pieces, which are hurriedly stuffed into its mouth.

I was very much interested in July 1901 at seeing a Jellyfish moving about in a shallow, trailing its tentacles behind it on the mud. A couple of crabs followed it up closely, seeming very much inclined to get a nip if possible, yet on the slightest change of movement they nervously bolted aside. I left them still manœuvring like a cruiser harassed by a couple of dodging torpedo boats.

SEASIDE SCAVENGERS

In the sunnier days of summer the Sandhopper (*Talitrus locusta*) is fairly common on the beach, spending much of its time amongst the débris cast up at the tide-mark. One has but to turn over the refuse there accumulated to bring to light swarms of all sizes, which are soon surprisedly skipping away to other places of shelter, and disappearing again as if by magic. There is very little that is of an animal or a vegetable character that defies their powers of assimilation; dead fish, birds, weeds, and even bits of writing-paper—anything, in fact, that can be nibbled, is good enough for them. Young and old are as busy as bees. It may be that the young remain with their parents until they attain maturity, as suggested by a certain writer; but I am inclined to think that the gregarious habits of the species have more to do with the keeping together of great and small than any possible family ties or mutual understanding. The Ringed Plover and many another small shore-bird are close students of the doings of the species, and account for the demise of not a few.

In the August of 1899, early one morning, I

found a large plaice-head washed up by the sea. A considerable company of small black flies (*Actora ostium*) and another of Sandhoppers had taken possession, and were immensely busy, above and below. On kicking the head, the host of participants in the feast decamped, some of the Sandhoppers tumbling out of the orifices in it below, and a few of the flies in amazement creeping from the mouth and gill-cover above. There is little doubt in my mind that the flies discover their food by their sense of smell, whilst the others use both eyes and organs corresponding with the sense of smell.

Having cleared the "table" of occupants, I picked up the fish's head and threw it a few yards farther along upon the same line of flotsam. The wind was blowing from the land, and the insect hunters were mostly engaged in their business between the tide-mark and the sea, and so were to *leeward* of their breakfast. In less than three minutes—for I timed them—as many as 97 insects had again boarded it, having worked by twos and threes and fours upwards, their progression being in leaps and runs—not an insect *flew*. Now they would stop a moment, like hounds making sure of the scent; now they jumped a few inches, and then they ran a like

distance; two occasionally meeting from slightly different angles would fraternise in friendly buzz and gambol, and then hurry on together to the joint. Others were still coming up when I lifted the head again and carried it several yards farther to windward. In a couple of minutes 17 were in to breakfast, some having travelled eight yards to get there. And once more I removed the head, placing it on this occasion nearer the water's edge. In three minutes but one insect had discovered it, and this was an individual which happened to be passing to leeward.

The Sandhoppers, however, do the lion's share of the eating, and astonish one by the thoroughness as well as the alacrity with which they devour every muscular fragment found upon the small fish and the crabs that are thrown up and left upon the sands. Perfectly empty crabshells are found, and Pogges, small flat fish, and others, are very quickly reduced to a mere outside skin and inside skeleton.

AN AGED PRAWN

The Æsop's Prawn (*Pandalus annulicornis*) is extremely abundant off the Norfolk and Suffolk

coasts. Pecks of it are often taken daily by each shrimp boat belonging to the port; of these craft some seventy or eighty are registered here. As is well known, these crustaceans shed their outside garment at stated intervals. But one I obtained in May 1901 had quite a cluster of young acorn barnacles (*Balanus balanoides*) growing upon its carapace. It is evident this jacket had not been recently acquired.

STARFISH MISHAP

After a severe north-east gale in April 1902 I took a long walk northward of Yarmouth along the beach. I observed hundreds of five-rayed Starfishes (*Uraster rubens*), and eleven, twelve, and thirteen-rayed Stars (*Solaster papposa*), hundreds of empty shells of the Horse Mussel (*Modolia modolius*), and with them many Sea-mice.

An interesting accident befell the cat of a friend with whom I had left a few of the Sunstars to look at. During the tea-hour, the feline member of the family managed to devour the half of one. In half an hour's time she could not walk straight, and groaned piteously. After a collapse of some hours' duration she got upon her feet, and could just

manage to stagger along; her jaws, which had become rigid, relaxed. The symptoms were altogether those of poisoning. Next day, however, she was herself again; and I received emphatic orders never to bring Starfishes there again.

INSECT NOTES

In the summer of 1894 a very old house, in one of the poorest and most crowded parts of the town, was pulled down in order to prevent its coming down on its own initiative. For three or four years previous a large swarm of bees had taken up their quarters in a part of a chimney that was unused, and when the wreckers commenced to unroof the place they met with a rather hostile reception from the wondering insects. One man was stung on the eyelid, whilst other stings were distributed in a most liberal manner. Numbers of the bees settled upon the naked rafters, while others buzzed threateningly around the despoilers' heads. A hole was made in the chimney, and a bunch of rags stuffed into the aperture, with sulphur and paraffin, and set fire to. This had the effect of stupefying the bees still at home, and adding an

unwonted flavour to the honey accumulated. Huge pieces of the comb were pulled out and thrown to the assembled children of tender and maturer ages below, for which a general scramble took place. Some brought plates and dishes in which to carry the comb away. I picked up a piece, and knocking several bees off it, found some of it exceedingly good, whilst a portion here and there was smoky-flavoured. While sucking a bit of comb one man received a sting on his finger, whilst another, heedless of fresh consignments descending from above, was struck on the back of his neck with a huge piece of soft treacly comb that fairly poulticed him. Two bucketsful of spoil in all was appropriated. The most curious thing witnessed was, when the chimney had been thrown down, how the survivors and the home-coming bees wheeled round and round, disconsolately and dumbfounded, in the air where the chimney had been! For two or three summers previous these bees, which had discovered the treasures spread upon the various sweet-stalls in the market-place, made themselves a great nuisance by smothering the sweets by the hundred all day long.

The following paragraph appeared in the columns of a local paper early in July 1897:—

“*Hemsby*.—Destruction of the strawberry crop. This parish has been met, in the midst of the Jubilee rejoicings, with a plague of beetles, which has totally destroyed the strawberry crop. In some instances, where upwards of a ton would have been taken, not 1 lb. will be gathered. This means a loss of many pounds. This pest is nowhere to be seen during the daytime, but comes in thousands during the night. Can any reader find a remedy or a destruction for these pests?”

On the strength of this paragraph I went to the village armed with a matchbox in order to make a few prisoners for future investigation. I went to one grower's place and looked at a half-acre patch of very dry, upland, sandy strawberry-ground, on which were twenty-seven rows of plants. The year previous it had yielded between 60 and 70 stones of fruit. This year scarcely a stone had been worth the gathering. Pushing my fingers through the soil, under and around the plants, I very soon had a handful of beetles—black-thoraxed, dull-brown backed and ruddier-brown legged little fellows, scarcely over half an inch in length, known to science as *Harpalus ruficornis*.

"They're the brutes!" said the indignant gardener. And certainly the "brutes" had been busy, whole clusters of strawberries, ripe and unripe, having been denuded of their seeds, and nibbled where the seeds came out. The soil, too, was riddled by them, and so numerous were they that a mole or two had been drilling high tunnels, undoubtedly in quest of them; for the soil was far too dry for worms. The previous year had been quite a "grub season," so the occupier said, although they did no mischief. At Scratby, Caister, Hemsby, Filby, and Ormesby, where the soil was dry and light, the beetles had been exceedingly mischievous, whilst at Belton, and in other marshy districts, good crops were the usual thing.

Various letters followed an article of mine published in the *Eastern Daily Press*; reasons for the beetles' abundance were suggested, as well as remedies advocated. Two previous mild winters, with exceedingly little frost, would account for the preservation of many of the grubs; and my opinion is that the zeal which characterises the gardeners in that neighbourhood in the slaughter of grub-eating birds was a far greater evil. Then, too, the continuous cultivation of the strawberry upon

the same fields must surely have been a mistake. I advocated turning in the village children to stir up the soil and collect the beetles, at a premium; and suggested that young fowls, more especially ducklings, should in future be penned in the vicinity in their season.

Half a dozen of the beetles I carried home I shut up in a glass pot, taking care that they should, for a few days at least, do penance. At the end of a week they were tame enough and fairly hungry. I tried them with freshly killed dipterous insects, but they refused to have anything to do with them; but on placing a strawberry amongst them, they "set to" with a zest that showed they were not only hungry but knew what suited their palate. They were busy all breakfast-time, and in broad daylight too, and were determined to remain by their treasure even when I twirled the strawberry round by the stalk between my fingers. In an hour the berry was completely riddled with holes.

At Belton there are gardens where the soil is quite as sandy and as dry, and undoubtedly as suited to the habits of *Harpalus*; but the Natterjack Toad is unusually numerous there, so much so that ground vermin of the *Harpalus* kidney are

rare enough, for the toad has an excellent appetite. Fortunately for themselves, as well as the toads, Belton folk let them altogether alone, well knowing the useful purpose they serve.

In May 1899 the larvæ of the *Tipula*, locally known as "Daddy-longlegs," were discovered in the grass of the Beach Gardens. For some unaccountable reason they turned up in thousands each morning—*pecks* of them, indeed, being seen in the few days of their sojourn aboveground. They were brushed up and destroyed, but the grass was ruined. The sparrows took no notice of them.

In the first week in September the grassy banks of Breydon walls on the north side near my houseboat simply teemed with Craneflies—the insects produced from the larvæ above mentioned. Each grass tuft looked like a ripe reed as they clung in clusters to it. As one brushed through the grass they fell off in scores and hundreds. I do not think I shall exaggerate if I estimate their numbers in millions! Fortunately, a stiff breeze from the landward side of the bank blew them into the salt water of Breydon, and in one day destroyed many of them. They floated in

thousands on the surface of the water, and although "Daddy" is a rare hand at clearing himself from the unwonted element, struggling was in vain, for the heavy wind very soon forced him back again, to perish.

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